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Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes
Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero

Table of Contents

Cover

Prologue: The Overpowered Mage Is Reborn
Chapter 1: A Demon's Presence
Chapter 2: The World Two Hundred Years Later
Chapter 3: Born with a Silver Spoon in His Mouth
Chapter 4: A Game of Tag
Chapter 5: Duel
Chapter 6: Lost Path
Chapter 7: Written Exam
Chapter 8: Practical Exam
Chapter 9: The Final Test
Chapter 10: The Results of the Exam
Extra Story: Youthful Memories

Afterword
Color Illustrations
About J-Novel Club
Copyright

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Prologue: The Overpowered Mage Is Reborn

"Sorry, Abel, but could you leave our party?"

It was a day like any other—save for the fact that Roy, our leader, had sprung this suggestion on me. I was so caught off guard, I couldn't respond.

"The world's more or less at peace now. It'd be a waste for an Archmage like you to be on the front lines. We're more than enough to deal with any demon stragglers."

Our party, led by Roy, had defeated the calamitous Demon King of Twilight who'd brought on the Age of Darkness. We'd saved the world.

"It's okay. I don't see it as a waste. I'm here because I want to be."

"Abel," Roy said firmly, stopping me from saying anything more. "You're not stupid. You must've realized that those Amber Eyes of yours have no place in a peaceful world."

His words sunk in slowly. I was at a loss for what to say. Eyes were a testament to one's strength. One's affinity for specific elemental magecraft was directly correlated with the color of their eyes. Fiery red eyes—Crimson Eyes—indicated an affinity for flames. Then there were Azure Eyes for water, green Verdant Eyes, and so on.

However, one color stood out from all the rest. Those with Amber Eyes like mine had an affinity for *all* elements. With some training, they could easily surpass all other mages. Those with Amber Eyes were considered the strongest, but they were also perceived as a symbol of evil. But who could fault this perception? Ninety percent of all demons had this very eye color.

"This should be mutually beneficial. With the peace we've secured, there's no doubt that the next big conflict will be between humans. When that happens, you'll be persecuted as a bad omen."

He had a point. Humans born with Amber Eyes were branded

as reincarnated demons. People like me were used to having stones thrown at us for as long as we could remember. However, in my case, I wasn't just your run-of-the-mill mage. I was a mage in the world's strongest party that had defeated the demon king. Were people really incapable of distinguishing between a hero who defeated the demon king and a common demon?

"I don't want you to think we're just tossing you out to fend for yourself, though. If you head west from here, there's an island. Remember? The same one where we took down that kraken. Demons don't go anywhere near it these days. We had villas constructed there, so maybe you could happily spend the rest of your days th—"

"Enough."

This was hilarious. My so-called comrades, whom I'd been on countless adventures with over the years, wanted to confine me on a deserted island. They didn't ever want to see me again. They wanted me gone.

"Fine. I'll leave."

"All right. No hard feelings. Here's the paperwork you'll need for the vil—"

"Keep it. I won't be going."

Roy's Jade Eyes widened. Looking at them, I only felt disgust.

I clicked my tongue in annoyance. "Relax. You'll never see me again."

"Abel!"

I turned on my heel and left. Roy called after me, frantically trying to explain—he'd phrased things poorly, he didn't mean anything by it... *No, Roy. You said exactly what you meant.* I didn't blame him, though. I knew better than that.

Truth be told, I'd realized a long time ago that after peace was achieved, I'd be persecuted for these eyes. That's why I didn't blame Roy for his actions. Similarly, I didn't blame the citizens of the kingdom, my party members, or even myself. It was this immature, ignorant world that was at fault. That's why I'd worked on and completed a unique magecraft, something that nobody else in this world could even dream of: Reincarnation Magecraft.

After leaving Roy and the others, I teleported to the entrance of the cave where my hideaway was. I made my way deep inside, along the stone walls and cobblestone corridors, until I reached the steel doors to my laboratory.

I'd erected layers upon layers of barriers here to keep others out, but apparently they were less effective when it came to dust, which had accumulated like piles of snow from my years of absence.

Maybe the culture of people living in a peaceful world will evolve. Maybe their education and knowledge will be enriched. Maybe this magecraft, which is impossible for them now, won't be, after two hundred years. Maybe people will be more open-minded and accepting of people with Amber Eyes.

I'd bet everything on the small glimmer of hope that the future would be different—that it would be better.

I pulled out tomes, medicine, and various gems all caked with dust. I'd already prepared the body into which I'd be reincarnated. The composition of a human's body was pretty simple, as it was only made up of twenty-nine different elements. About sixty percent of it was water, with a few overlapping components such as carbon, ammonia, and phosphorus. After conducting numerous experiments, using magecraft to examine the various elements that composed humans, I finally completed my ideal body.

Okay—all done. I lay down in the coffin I'd prepared and gazed at the ceiling. Before I knew it, I was struck with a sudden wave of sleep as the reincarnation magecraft slowly pulled my soul from my current body. My eyelids felt like lead...and when I opened them next, I'd be in the distant future.

With that thought in mind, I fell asleep.

Truth be told, I had made a mistake. I should've told my companions about this reincarnation magecraft. My mistake would come to cause much grief for the denizens of the future. As for how, exactly...that will be revealed at a later time.

Chapter 1: A Demon's Presence

When my eyes opened again, I found myself in the same coffin I'd fallen asleep in. I'd been asleep for so long that my body ached. As I pushed the lid open, a sudden dull sound grated on my ears. My guess was that it was inevitable for the coffin to have broken due to all the centuries it had lain dormant. If my reincarnation magecraft had worked, then I'd currently be two hundred years in the future. It was only natural that things would have deteriorated.

"Wow..." I let out a sound of surprise as I stepped out into the light and saw my now smaller limbs.

It looked like I'd succeeded. My soul had entered the body that I'd prepared, which, for the record, was based on what I'd looked like as a kid. Maybe I should've changed my appearance a little, but I was relatively attached to my looks, so I'd found it hard to throw it all away. But I didn't expect this to be a problem—anyone able to recognize me should have been long gone by now.

"Hm... Where's the mirror? I remember it used to be around there..."

I began scanning the area, but didn't see my standing mirror anywhere. There should've been one nearby, but maybe an earthquake or something had knocked it down and broken it. Perhaps the shards were hidden under the rubble. However, my search was cut short as something else caught my attention.

"I sense a demon."

I focused my ears and caught the sound of footsteps echoing in the cave. From the sound of them, I determined that they belonged to a demon that'd taken the form of a woman. *Pretty good disguise.* They'd probably be able to fool any normal human, but not me.

This wasn't a great situation, though. How had she been able to penetrate all the barriers I'd erected? Could they have deteriorated over the years too? If I was still in my previous body, I wouldn't have been worried at all, but...could I defeat her in this child's body?

I only had one chance to launch a preemptive attack. I'd have

to wait for her to open the doors. As soon as she did, I'd hit her with the strongest spell I could muster at this moment. So long as I was able to strike first, it'd put me in an advantageous position, even in this body.

The heavy doors slowly opened, and I heard a voice. "Master Abel?"

Stunned by her beauty, I was so caught off guard that I completely lost concentration on the spell I was preparing to cast. *That's* how beautiful she was.

She had Azure Eyes, indicating an affinity for water. She was slender, with skin as white as a cloud, and long, silky silver hair. She dropped the wicker basket she'd been holding.

"H-How I've waited for this day..."

Uh...huh? Excuse me?! I couldn't make heads or tails of what was going on. Suddenly, the girl collapsed to the ground, tears pouring out of her eyes.

"My deepest apologies, Master Abel. I-It's just that I've waited so long."

Waiting for me? I have absolutely no recollection of this beauty. This wasn't something I was proud of, but I'd always been so engrossed in my research that I'd gone my entire life without any romantic relationships.

She was either an incredibly gifted actor...or the tears she was shedding were genuine. Had she really been waiting for me? Who was she? Did I *know* any demons?

"Oh... Okay... I get it now..."

A strong sense of déjà vu washed over me. I *had* met her before. Seeing her crying on the ground while peeking up at me jogged my memory. Suddenly, my ex-party members' words replayed in my head.

"Abel, are you crazy?! She may be a child, but she's still a demon!"

"I can't believe this! She's our enemy—humanity's *enemy!"*

I remembered all this like it was yesterday. The day after we defeated the demon king, I saved the life of a demon child on a whim. She'd had the double whammy of bad fortune, where not only had she failed to escape the castle quickly enough, but she was also the daughter of the demon king. Just for that, they'd wanted to kill her.

Her name surfaced in my mind. "Long time no see, Lilith."

"It's wonderful to see you in good health, Master Abel."

Two hundred years later, there was barely any trace left of the little girl she once was...especially in the chest area. She now looked like a woman in her twenties.

"Since you saved my life two hundred years ago, I've devoted myself to repaying you! I'd heard that you left the hero's party and disappeared, so I spent over a century traveling the world, searching for you until I finally came across this place."

Uh-huh. Maybe I'd been a little too naive if a demon had been able to find my hideaway. The barrier had to have weakened over the years—I must have messed up my calculations. If I had another opportunity to reincarnate myself, I'd have to fine-tune things to prevent these problems from occurring again.

"By the way, Lilith, maybe I'm misremembering, but didn't we have the same eye color?"

This was one of the things I'd been most curious about since I'd realized it was her. How had she changed the color of her eyes? It was fair to say that the color of one's eyes corresponded to their Soul Hue, which comprised their very being. Even reincarnating couldn't change the color of my eyes. In other words, there shouldn't have been any way for her to have easily accomplished

this.

"I have Amber Eyes, just like you do," she responded. "However, I am currently wearing Color Contacts."

"Color...what?"

"It may be quicker to show you what I mean rather than explain it."

"Huh?!"

I practically screamed in surprise as Lilith put her fingers into one of her eyes and peeled something off it.

"This is an item known as a color contact. Once you get used to it, you barely notice it's there."

I had no words. *So this semitransparent sheet has the function of changing your eye color?* This was something that nobody in the age I lived in would've ever thought of or been able to produce.

Before I knew it, I found myself chuckling. I'd been right to choose this era to reincarnate into. The advances of humanity were amazing. There'd always been prejudice about the color of one's eyes. Humans had hated each other and sometimes even waged wars over something as simple as that. So many lives had been lost over something so trivial. It was truly ironic how the origin of all this conflict could be resolved by this semitransparent sheet.

"Master Abel, I have something I'd like to discuss with you. Would it be all right if we speak elsewhere? I live not too far from here."

"Yeah, sure."

I was interested in what she had to say to me, but I was even more interested in seeing and experiencing how the world had changed. Lilith picked up her basket and pulled something out from inside. From what I could tell, it was a warm, thin cloth woven with fuzzy strings.

"What is this? Some kind of neckwear?" I asked as Lilith wrapped it around my neck.

A bright smile spread across her face. "It's a type of garment to aid against the cold—a scarf. Its name has changed in the two hundred years that you've been idle."

She took my hand and began slowly walking with me, out of the room and to the outside world. When we exited, my breath turned white. In fact, the entire world in front of me was coated in white. There weren't even footsteps in the freshly fallen snow.

"Let us go forth, Master Abel."

I nodded as we set out across the snow blanketing this new world.

Chapter 2: The World Two Hundred Years Later

As I walked down the snowy mountain with Lilith, I saw that there was a small village at the base of the mountain. *Hm. I don't remember that being here two hundred years ago, but I guess things are bound to change.* There shouldn't have been any kind of geological advantage to living in this remote area, but for some strange reason, the place seemed prosperous. There must've been a competent noble governing this area. As I considered all the possibilities, we apparently arrived at our destination.

"Here we are. Over there is a hideaway I've prepared for you."

"Oh, wow..." I reflexively let out a sound of amazement.

The place in question was incredibly luxurious. Back in my day, this would've been somewhere royalty lived. It was a symmetrical two—wait, no—three-story building. *I wonder how many rooms it has. I wanna see what's inside already.*

"My deepest apologies, Master Abel, but...I believe you are looking at the wrong building. It is the building next to that one."

"Hm?" I shifted my gaze to what Lilith was indicating, and saw a wooden house. If I was being nice, I'd describe it as "simple." If I was being mean, I'd describe it as "homely." Though maybe I only felt this way because I was comparing it to that luxurious home. To be honest, it wasn't too shabby. It had a chimney, and now that I looked at it, there might have been an attic too. It certainly had a sort of charm to it. *Yeah...*

"It's pretty normal..."

"Normal is best. Taking your situation into consideration, I felt it best to avoid being conspicuous."

Oh, I see. I guess she has a point. When I last lived, I was feared by some as the strongest mage, but in this child's body, I couldn't even muster a third of the power I used to have. It was probably best to lay low until I hit my growth spurt.

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As Lilith showed me around the interior of the house, all I could think was how much it resembled the typical houses from two hundred years ago. The wooden floors were well polished and the desks, also made of wood, had a bright luster to them. It also had a fireplace, a couch, and a skillfully crafted rug. I'd had a couch in my past life, so I wasn't too surprised by that, but the quality of the rug's craftsmanship astonished me. It was incredible. There was one item, however, that I was seeing for the first time. My eyes went to the ceiling where a mysterious sphere hung.

Suddenly, a bright light emanated from the sphere. *What's going on?* The only people in here were me and Lilith, and I didn't sense anyone composing a spell to light it.

"My apologies. I had no intention of causing you surprise. The glowing sphere is called a 'light bulb.' It is a tool for illumination. With a simple flick of a switch, you are able to light up your surroundings. It is a most exceptional invention."

Lilith proceeded to toggle the switch on and off, resulting in the light going out and coming back on accordingly. *Hm, I see. How convenient.* Most likely, the inside of the light bulb contained small magic stones that would react to the switch being flipped and automatically activate an illumination spell. The small amount of mana flow that I sensed in the vicinity of the light bulb served as proof of my theory.

"You don't seem too surprised."

"Oh no, it's really impressive. I just can't help but think it's more convenient to cast this kind of magecraft by yourself."

Magecraft that could light up an entire area was typically the specialty of those with Crimson Eyes, who had mastery over fire magecraft. But also, simple magecraft like this, which was used to light a room, was something that everyone was capable of doing, regardless of their eye color. I remembered kids hurrying to learn the spell Flashlight because of their hatred for the dark.

Lilith giggled. "That line of thinking is just like you."

How so? The illumination magecraft, Flashlight, was one of the most fundamental spells out there. If anything, my line of thinking shouldn't have been unique. Anyone who studied magecraft would think the same way.

"I'll get started on dinner. Please relax as you will," Lilith said,

before going into the kitchen.

Since this wasn't a large house, I could easily see what was going on in the kitchen from the living room.

"If you're feeling fatigued, please feel free to lie down on the couch. I will inform you when the meal is ready."

Well, if you insist. Maybe it was because this was the first time in centuries that I'd been awake, but an unexpected amount of exhaustion washed over me. Moments after I lay down, I found myself drifting off into a comfortable nap.

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About an hour later, Lilith came to wake me up as promised.

"Master Abel, dinner is ready."

I opened my eyes to find a meal laid out on the table. The house was filled with a delicious scent, stimulating my appetite.

"You were fast asleep."

"Yeah. Apparently I get sleepier more often in a child's body."

"May I ask you something? Why did you choose a child's body, knowing full well its physical limitations?"

"Well, sure, there are risks...but there are a lot of advantages as well."

In essence, one generally experienced three peaks over the course of one's life. An academic peak in adolescence, a physical peak in their twenties, and a magical peak in their thirties. The reason I'd chosen to reincarnate into a body that had not entered adolescence yet was because I knew that I'd have to learn a lot of new things after waking up in a completely different time period. But also, I thought that since I was going to the trouble of beginning a new life, I might as well start as a kid.

"Oh, wow, you really went all out with this meal!"

Clam and tomato cream pasta was on the menu today. Even though it seemed pretty simple, it began to look fairly upscale when paired with the stylish cutlery and the various side dishes.

"Please enjoy."

"Thanks."

Good grief. It seemed like sleeping for two hundred years had made my body crave sustenance. I didn't even have time to comment on the food before I'd scarfed it all down.

"How was it?"

“I think it was pretty delicious. Did you study cooking somewhere?”

“Oh, nothing as extensive as that. I simply read some books.”

“I see... So this is an age where there are books about cooking, huh?”

Two hundred years ago, books were incredibly high-class items. Paper itself had been very pricey, but then the cost of books really shot up when you factored in the labor required to write out the contents of each book by hand. Plus, there was the tragic situation where some books would have a sharp reduction in quality, due to mistakes cropping up during the copying process. Back then, almost every book was about magecraft, while the rest were history books. At the very least, nobody thought of making books about cooking.

“I suppose that back then, you could purchase a small house for the price of one book,” Lilith said.

“Yeah. I pretty much put all my money into buying books, so I was constantly broke.”

In those days, I’d only wanted originals, which cost exorbitant sums. Thanks to that fixation, I was always in need of money. I chuckled to myself. I couldn’t wait to begin buying books at actually affordable prices. The advancements of humanity were sobering. Civilization had advanced more drastically than I’d ever imagined.

“If you’d like, I could show you the library upstairs after dinner.”

“Oh, wow! You made a library for me?!”

“Yes. I’m aware of your love of reading, and thought that it would be most efficient for you to learn more about the modern world through books.”

I could barely hide my excitement as I followed Lilith to the second floor. *Yes, books! I can easily see myself getting through adolescence without fear of ever being bored!* Or at least...that was the kind of optimism I carried before I learned of the secret decline that was occurring in the world.

Chapter 3: Born with a Silver Spoon in His Mouth

"What...the hell?" Having discovered the state of the modern world, I couldn't hide my surprise.

It was now the morning after I'd pulled an all-nighter, and the rays from the sun of the new world I was in greeted me. Overall, there were two big changes that the world had gone through. First, there was the fact that the world had undergone a technological revolution. No complaints there.

The culture of this world was booming thanks to advancements in the manufacturing of magic stones. The mana within them could be converted to a number of different kinds of energy, depending on the way that they were used. A great example would be the so-called "Light Bulb" that Lilith had explained to me yesterday.

Extracting the energy from magecraft stones had led to all sorts of industrial innovations, which resulted in incredible improvements to the quality of life of the general populace. Honestly, though, if you asked me, it wasn't necessary to try and automate every last bit of magecraft. In fact, it made me laugh. This was a perfect segue into the second big change, and also the thing that surprised me most.

"I can't believe it... How is the level of modern mages so low?"

The book of spells I was reading was a great example. The sentences within were unnecessarily long, colorful, and bordered on rambling. Even worse, the spells depicted in its pages were things that any child would've known back in my day.

Sadly, this was still one of the better books. There were books that boldly presented incorrect magecraft compositions while completely butchering their introduction and explanations. *Hey, Mr. Author, did you actually test out any of these compositions?* It'd take me forever to go over everything that they'd gotten wrong.

There were so many aspects missing that if anyone followed these instructions, there was a hundred percent chance that the

result would literally explode in their face. As an expert in the field, I could guarantee that.

I jumped out of my chair to stretch before moving to the door. *It might be good to air out the room a little... Oh?* To my surprise, there was some bread left outside on a plate, with a note resting on top.

Dear Master Abel,

I have prepared your breakfast and lunch. I will return in the evening after I finish work for the day. Please use the house as you wish.

Sincerely, Lilith

She'd most likely left this note so as to avoid interrupting me while I was focused on reading. How considerate. *Work, huh?* Now that I thought about it, Lilith had to have been making a living one way or another all this time. I was a little curious about what kind of job she could do in this village full of humans.

"Damn... I'm starting to feel sleepy."

I'd been yawning nonstop since a little while ago. Pulling an all-nighter probably wasn't easy for a body as young as this. I ultimately decided to find a good stopping place in the book I was reading and sleep for a bit. I took the bread that Lilith had so kindly prepared for me and began chomping down on it while reading.

Not too long after, I heard the door open. *Hm?* Apparently someone had entered, and judging from their presence and air around them, it obviously wasn't Lilith. Whoever they were, they seemed to be filled with energy. They were so loud that I could hear them approaching the library all the way until they loudly pounded on the door.

"Pardon!" A kid with dirty blond hair who looked to be around the same age as me barged into the library. *Aren't you supposed to wait for a response before letting yourself in?* "Oho! So *you're* Lilith's little brother?"

Uh, no, I'm not. Apparently, this kid was an acquaintance of Lilith's. From what I could tell, he was a normal human, but his appearance made it obvious he wasn't a commoner. His hair was neatly combed and he was wearing flashy clothes. He had a red jacket with a pattern on it that bordered on annoying. Underneath that was a shirt with flowers embroidered on the collar.

The dots connected. He had to be a little rich boy—a noble. If I had to guess, he was probably from the family who lived in the huge house next door. *Good grief.* What was this kid even doing here?

“Today’s your lucky day, commoner! I, the great Ted, will be making you my underling!”

Uh-huh... I see. He may not have said it in so many words, but the point seemed to be that he wanted to take me on as his apprentice. There was only one appropriate response—ignoring him. He was just another brat—typical of any time period.

“Hey, are you listening? Hello?! Hey, Lilith’s little brother...Abebe?”

“*Abel.*”

“Come on, *Aybuhl*! Be my underling! You know what an underling is, right? It’s an apprentice!”

“Sorry, but I have absolutely no interest in a master-apprentice relationship.”

“Aw, come on! Just do it already!”

Ugh. What a day this is turning out to be. This little spoiled noble brat was shouting at me like the kid he was and showing absolutely no sign of wanting to leave. He left me no choice. I took no pleasure in frightening children, but there was no way I could focus on reading with him here. *Time to give him a little scare.* Having made up my mind, I slammed my book shut.

“Let me warn you. It’s best not to get involved with me. You know what my eyes signify, don’t you?”

Honestly, acting wasn’t exactly my forte, but I just had to suck it up and keep going in order to resolve this situation. I looked down at the invader with my Amber Eyes, which sparkled gold, the same color as the eyes of demons. They were an omen of evil. This should’ve been enough to get him to stay away from me.

“Huh? You... Your eyes!” Ted took a step back, and in order to keep the pressure on, I made sure he got a really good look at them.

Things were going just as I expected. All I needed was one more push to up the fear factor.

I cackled. “That’s right. I’ve nothing to hide. I possess the eyes of demon—”

However, Ted’s next move, which betrayed every last one of my assumptions, was beyond my predictions. He took a good look at my face, then snorted.

“Seriously?” He began to laugh. “A-Amber eyes?!” Why was he rolling around on the floor laughing his head off? “This is my first

time seeing them in person! Amber Eyes really *do* exist!"

Uh...what's going on? I could only stand there, mouth agape, completely and utterly shocked.

"Ted! You can't just barge into Miss Lilith's house without her permission!"

In the next moment, a guy with hair the same color as Ted's entered the room, frantic. He seemed a little older than Ted, maybe by two or three years. Judging by their appearances, it was more than likely they were siblings.

"Barth—look at this guy! This is the first time I've seen Pleb Eyes!"

Can I get a translation for what this brat is saying and doing? Still, in the end, he was just a kid. Everything he said and did could be written off as mere childish tomfoolery. Surely, someone older—like this Barth guy—would be more aware of the significance of Amber Eyes.

"Oh. Ms. Lilith had mentioned that she was housing her incredibly talented little brother, but...I guess my expectations were a little too high."

I had no words. *Huh? Is the older brother just as ignorant as the younger one?* No explanation should have been necessary. The belief that Amber Eyes were simultaneously a symbol of supreme strength and evil should have been widespread. *But wait. Maybe...*

"Are Amber Eyes looked down upon in this world?"

Ted burst out laughing again. "Barth, this Abebe guy doesn't seem to know *anything*!"

I was so shocked and confused, I didn't even feel like correcting him about my name anymore.

"Listen up, Abebe. Your Pleb Eyes have absolutely no affinity with any element. It's useless for any magecraft—whether that's fire, water, wind, creation magecraft, or healing magecraft. Since they have zero use, they're called Zero Eyes!"

"Ted, that's enough. You're going too far."

Well...this was certainly a surprise. True, utilizing one's Amber Eyes required training—more specifically, close to ten years of continuous training were necessary to even have a chance of making use of other elements. People with Amber Eyes were late bloomers. However, one could also look at it this way—spending a mere ten years in study produced incredible results. After all that training, those with Amber Eyes were able to manipulate any

element they wanted.

Of course, there was still variation between individuals, but by and large, it was possible for everyone who possessed Amber Eyes to perfectly manifest magecraft of any element to its highest degree. Sure—we also inevitably had to endure unjustified persecution, but as a trade-off, we had the strongest abilities, bar none.

"Uh... Abeshi, right?" *How did he even come up with* that *name? Sounds like it'd be fun to scream.*

"It's Abel."

"I'm sorry my little brother said all those rude things to you, Abel." Barth tipped his head slightly.

"Don't worry about it. It's not a problem," I said in a small voice. *I really don't care, though.*

"You apologize too, Ted."

"Why? I don't wanna. He *is* a Pleb Eyes, after all."

"No—you need to apologize, Ted. This is an age where people can live happily, even if they can't use magecraft. He'll probably be serving our family for years to come, so you should be kind to him."

Barth, was it? At your core, it seems you look down on Amber Eyes too. Personally speaking, I didn't care too much about the kind of unrestrained mockery I got from idiots like Ted. If anything, I preferred it to the kind of half-assed kid-glove approach that intelligent and prideful people like Barth adopted.

"Come on, Ted, let's go home and study magecraft. We have a responsibility as chosen ones to improve ourselves."

"Okay, fine. Later, Pleb Eyes Abibi!"

They left, the door shutting hurriedly between them. *Uh, seriously... What the heck was that?* They just barged in, verbally abused me, then left. It was like a storm had blown through. But I had learned something. I pulled out the book that I'd been reading and turned back to where I'd left off—"The History of War." There hadn't been a single war with the demons in the past two hundred years, meaning that peace had reigned.

With no demons around, people naturally stopped fearing Amber Eyes. Furthermore, apparently nowadays it was only necessary for people to train a little in order to begin using the element affiliated with their eyes with ease.

On the other hand, Amber Eyes took a long time to mature—and even then, it took a lot of training for those who possessed them to learn any magecraft at all. In this age where the general

level of magical ability had fallen, that was probably the reason why those with Amber Eyes had become the target of ridicule and labeled useless.

It'd taken a while, but I finally understood why Lilith used Color Contacts. I couldn't really get myself to like the idea of using cosmetics to hide who I was, but under these circumstances, I completely understood. First came persecution and now plain ridicule. *Good grief.* Who would've guessed it'd be so hard to lead a normal life?

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"So you work as a servant?" I asked Lilith, after she came back.

"Yes, that's correct. They are presently known as housemaids, though. Does my maid uniform suit me?" She smiled and spun around once, obviously proud of her clothes.

It was an apron dress so dark green it might as well have been black. Oops—it was a "maid uniform." I needed to adopt the modern vernacular.

"Yeah, it looks good on you."

She giggled. "I'm glad. I will begin dinner preparations, then."

"Thanks. Oh, by the way..."

"Yes?"

"I finally understand why you wear Color Contacts."

"Oh... I see."

At first I'd thought it was simply because she was a demon, but it was actually due to something else entirely.

After doing a little digging in the library, I confirmed without a doubt that Amber Eyes were mocked by the people of this age. And from what I could tell, that mockery was pretty intense. The two noble brats who'd come over earlier had displayed perfectly normal reactions for people of this time. *Great. New reasons why life with Amber Eyes sucks.*

"Demons have lost most of their strength these past two hundred years," Lilith said as she cooked. I stayed silent and continued flipping through the book I'd brought out of the library. "After the hero party you led defeated the demon king, humans everywhere began waging war against the scattered forces of the demons...and won."

"I see..."

"Thus, the demons fell to ruin, the world found peace, and the standard of mages decreased."

"And since the main reason Amber Eyes were feared had disappeared, so did the knowledge that they could become the strongest, so long as they trained hard enough."

"Precisely, Master Abel."

Our conversation was strangely subdued, a mood which was only enhanced by the soft sounds of her rhythmic chopping, and the crackling of wood in the fireplace.

"Lilith, do you despise humans? No—do you hate me and the other heroes?"

Without a doubt, we were the ones who'd caused the fall of the demons. I was also the one who killed the demon king...that is to say, her father.

"I suppose there were certainly days when I felt hatred, and days where I cried my eyes out."

The sound of the knife came to a halt. I still had my nose buried in the book, so I didn't confirm this visually, but I was certain her eyes were on me.

"However, more than anything, I remember how you desperately tried to protect me. You even traveled with me in order to find a safe place for me to live. Do you recall?"

"Yeah."

"We might only have spent half a month together... However, I learned magecraft and the laws of humans from you. There were

also...other things as well..."

"Just say it. You used to tell me everything back then."

Lilith giggled. "'A good woman wears her secrets like she wears earrings.' That's what I learned from the matron of the tavern who took me in."

In these past two hundred years, Lilith had become strangely bewitching. She used to be such a straightforward and adorable kid.

"So..." Lilith approached me, getting down on one knee and looking straight into my eyes. "I deeply adore you, Master Abel."

Her face was a little too close to mine for comfort. This all made me feel kinda embarrassed, so I hid the bottom half of my face with my book.

"I see..."

Thinking about it, I realized Lilith had spent all this time waiting for my reincarnation. She'd even prepared a place where I could live in peace. If she'd simply felt like she needed to repay me for saving her life, I'm not sure she would've gone that far. Her feelings must have been strong.

"Thanks..." I mumbled. Saying my feelings out loud was seriously embarrassing.

After that, I found it difficult to remain in reality with my thoughts, so I escaped to the world of books, and didn't make eye contact with Lilith again even once.

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An hour later, one thing led to another and I somehow found myself taking a bath with Lilith. *Before you jump to any conclusions, I'd just like to defend myself by saying that I did not ask for this.* She'd been the one to forcefully invite me. One could even say that she'd practically abducted me to the bath.

"My apologies, Master Abel. After our conversation, my affection for you began to swell out of control."

I had no words, but I really understood now. At least, I understood that she was afflicted with an illness that would make her abduct someone to the bath when her affection grew out of control. *I'm sorry, Lilith. My paltry healing magecraft can't fix that.*

"Good grief... A guy and a girl naked in the same bathtub... Do you even know what this situation signifies?" I asked.

Lilith giggled. "You say the most amusing things, Master Abel."

She didn't seem embarrassed at all. "Pardon me if I am speaking out of turn... However, your words lack weight when uttered in the body of a young, inexperienced boy."

I winced at her rebuttal. She'd really twisted the knife. It was true that I had absolutely no adult appeal in this prepubescent body. On the flip side, Lilith's body had matured in all sorts of ways over these past two centuries.

I had no idea that at a certain size, women's breasts would float in the bath. This was a day of multiple discoveries. When we first met, I'd been in my late thirties, and she'd been a shrimp who was barely five years old. Oh, how the tables had turned.

"Oh, I'm so glad! Master Abel has begun to see me as a woman," Lilith said, drawing me into her arms.

Good grief. She might've been underestimating just how strong the desires of men were. In fact, boys at this age had higher libidos than adults. But I was at a loss. I wasn't the type of person who'd let myself be on the receiving end of teasing forever. She left me no choice. When we got out of the bath, I'd have to put my pride as a guy on the line and go on the offensive.

◇

In the distance, if I listened closely, I could hear the critters of the evening chirping softly. I slept with Lilith that night. In my past life, I had no interest in anything except getting stronger, so I'd never been with a woman. But maybe this was what happiness was all about. After being with Lilith, I slept better than I ever had in my life.

Chapter 4: A Game of Tag

A few days had passed since I'd successfully reincarnated. I'd managed to avoid getting involved in any large incidents, which allowed me to pass the days enjoyably. I ate breakfast with Lilith in the mornings and spent my afternoons in the library studying magecraft, only taking a short break for the lunches that Lilith prepared for me in advance.

My days were pretty much spent holed up in the library studying while waiting for Lilith to come back. It honestly didn't feel too different from waiting two hundred years to reincarnate. I had a whole list of things I should've been taking care of, but...well, there was something in the latter half of the afternoon that I couldn't avoid.

I heard a proud laugh. "Be grateful. I've returned, Pleb Eyes!"

The door burst open, and standing there was the younger of the two spoiled noble brats with his dirty blond hair. He'd made a habit of visiting every day, which got in the way of my studying. I understood where he was coming from, though. Most likely, he wanted someone his age to hang out with.

I slammed the book I'd been reading shut. It went without saying that I was under absolutely no obligation to concern myself with him, though.

"Hey! Wait! Uh...commoner!"

Sorry, Richie McRich, but I'm not so free that I can spare time to look after a kid. I wrapped my scarf around my neck before using Body Fortification magecraft to strengthen my legs, and jumped out of the window onto the roof of the house next door.

"Whoa!!! How did you do that?!"

Overall, I'd gotten used to being in a child's body, but I still was far from being at the same level that I'd been at as an adult. The spell I'd used was only a hundredth of Body Fortification's full potential, but it was more than enough to leave him completely stunned.

"Damn it all! I can do that too!" Copying what I'd done, Ted

jumped out of the window.

Hm. Looks like he can use Body Fortification, for the most part. Even if he could, though, the speed at which he supplied mana for the spell was excessive. He obviously didn't have the basics down whatsoever.

Body Fortification magecraft relied on directing mana to certain parts of the body to shield them like armor, at which point the mana would be released from the body like water. The way he was doing it made him expend his mana unnecessarily.

He let out a scream after realizing he wasn't going to make the jump. Just as I'd expected from an inexperienced kid who tried to copy me. I watched as he tumbled into a bush below.

"Hey... You okay?"

He's not dead, is he? Please don't be dead. Even if his death was entirely his own fault, there would be hell to pay if a noble like him got hurt.

"Hey! Stay where you are, you Pleb bastard!"

Hm, maybe I'd underestimated Ted. He was a lot tougher than I expected for a rich brat. Ted stuck his head out of the bush he'd fallen into, then leapt directly towards me like a charging boar.

Well...now what? I could avoid him easily, or I could let myself get hit. Either would be annoying. I ultimately chose to jump over him, kinda like we were playing leapfrog.

"Agh!" he screamed, crashing into the spot where I'd been. The impact looked worse than it actually was. For the record, I'd held back, so there was no way he should've been hurt.

"Wh-What's with you?! You're just a stupid Pleb Eyes! I'm pissed now! So...so...pissed!"

Maybe you need to learn some new words. He began stomping his foot angrily like a kid throwing a tantrum.

"Calm down. I bet with another twenty or so years of serious training, you'll become good at this."

Since I was dealing with a kid, it seemed best to sprinkle in some praise. The more I thought about it, though, the more I realized that I didn't really know what the average ability level of mages was like in this world.

"You! Y-You— How dare you treat me like this?! You're my underling!"

Unfortunately, this only seemed to make Ted angrier. *But also, I'm sorry to break it to you, kid. I am not and have never been your*

underling. Oh, wait... I felt a flash of inspiration.

"Okay, then. I don't mind being your underling."

"Oh? Oh! You're finally getting serious? That's commendable!"

"Thanks...but I have some conditions."

I looked down at my scarf. Ever since Lilith had told me about this garment for the prevention of cold, I'd been treating it very dearly. The area we lived in was high above sea level, so it was covered in snow for half of the year—meaning that something that was good at keeping you warm was indispensable.

"If you can take this scarf from me before sunset, I'll be your underling."

If this noble brat was so intent on barging in and interfering with my studies, then I might as well take advantage of the situation and get a little exercise out of it. Doing this would also enable me to get a good read on the abilities of modern mages.

"You're on! I just have to snag that scarf from you, right? Easy-peasy!"

Ted seemed to be raring to go. *Where does all that confidence come from, though?*

"Okay, then. Ready? Go!"

"Here I come!"

I used Body Fortification to jump to the roof of another house while Ted followed me from below, using nearby wooden boxes. Our game of tag on the roofs had begun.

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After a while, it seemed that the noble brat realized that the way he was casting Body Fortification was inefficient. He then switched up strategies and began to rely on his own physical abilities instead, hopping around to continue pursuing me while barely using any magecraft.

Well, color me surprised. Everybody had their own strengths and weaknesses. In Ted's case, he didn't seem to have any talent for magecraft, he wasn't especially attractive, and to top it all off, he was an idiot. Even taking the fact that he was a child out of the equation, I didn't sense even a single ember of intelligence in his brain.

However, that being said, he was above average in the physical strength department. Despite being a child, he hadn't stopped trying

to chase me down. For that, he deserved praise.

"H-How is it that you haven't broken a sweat yet?" he gasped through labored breaths.

I'm well trained, unlike a little kid like you. Even back in the day, there wasn't anybody who could keep up with me when I got serious. To put it into perspective, Roy, as the Hero of Wind, was probably the closest to posing even a slight challenge to me.

"There's still plenty of time before the sun sets. Do you wanna keep going?"

"Damn...it all... You little—"

Ted stuck his arm out straight towards my scarf, but he was too slow—way too slow. There was no way such a straightforward attack would reach me. I deflected his arm, taking a step back.

"Agh! I-I can't— I can't keep going!" Ted yelled, before collapsing to the ground.

So this is about his limit? Honestly, I'd only expected him to last five minutes. The fact that he'd hung in there for twenty was pretty impressive. This was beyond my expectations. Despite being scummy, he still was an "elite" noble. Most likely, he'd been given basic training to increase his stamina.

"One day... One day I'll definitely win!"

At any rate, Ted had given up, so I decided to put an end to my exercising and return to the library. I turned on my heel and right as I did, something caught my attention. *What is that?* From up here, I could see into the luxurious mansion next door. There I saw a familiar face.

"Barth...was it?"

The older noble brat was apparently talking with Lilith...but about what? I was curious, so I used Body Fortification to strengthen my hearing. My ears rang a little, but after a moment, the sound became clear. I adjusted the scope of my hearing and focused it on my targets. This was a technique I often used in the past to eavesdrop on the strategy sessions of my enemies, and now I was using it to eavesdrop on the two of them.

"As I've said multiple times before, I am unable to court you."

The conversation seemed heated. It was only now that it dawned on me how beautiful Lilith had become. No matter how calm Barth played it, he was still an adolescent. Being in the presence of a beauty like Lilith day after day was sure to make anyone develop feelings.

“Is there something about me that you’re unsatisfied with?!”

I’d loved to have quipped that his attitude was not doing him any favors, but I felt bad for him. He may have been a kid, but being rejected must’ve been painful—maybe even more so for an extremely prideful noble like him.

“My problem does not lie with you, but the fact that my heart already belongs to someone else.”

“Are you talking about that Abel kid?”

“Yes, that is correct. In any case, I must apologize. However, I have never and will never consider courting you, Master Barth. Please move on.”

This reminded me of reading about how there was no time a woman was more cruel than when a guy she had absolutely no interest in tried to approach her. I was getting a real-life demonstration of that.

“Y-You are in love with your own blood brother. You’re disgusting! You should be ashamed!” he yelled before running away, wiping away his tears with his sleeve.

He had my sympathies. I wasn’t really her little brother, but I had to pretend I was; otherwise a lot of things wouldn’t add up. From where I was, I could tell that Lilith was slightly bothered by what’d just happened, but regardless, she returned to work.

Okay, well, now that that’s over, I’m just gonna pretend I never saw it and erase it from my memory. Besides, it was about time I moved out of the way—I didn’t even have to turn around to see what was coming.

“Great Ted Kick!” Ted yelled out the name of his dropkick, which I easily sidestepped. “Dammit! H-How did you dodge that?!”

I can dodge you with my eyes closed. I knew exactly how this noble brat was going to move. If he wanted to catch me off guard, he’d first have to learn how to suppress his presence.

“Oh no. I’m…I’m really at my limit.”

In the end, that final attack was the last drop of strength he could muster. Now that he was fully out of mana, he passed out on the spot. *Is this a failure?* I might’ve gone a little too hard on him. It was only the first day, though.

But I only felt these regrets briefly, because it turned out that Ted liked this little game of ours. He came over the next day and the day after that as well to continue playing. As for me, I welcomed it because it was nice to train not just my mind, but my

body as well. *Looks like I found a convenient person to kill time with.*

Chapter 5: Duel

"You're mine, Abel!"

Yeah—maybe you'd have a chance if you stopped announcing your attacks. I easily deflected his arm with the spine of my book. *Hm? Wait a minute.*

"Ted, did you just say my name?"

He let out a triumphant laugh. "You really think after all the times we've played together, I wouldn't know your name by now?"

It was so heartwarming watching kids grow. I felt all warm and fuzzy inside...but also, the logical side of me knew that I shouldn't have been so surprised. Most kids would've been able to immediately remember my name. This rich brat simply had an extremely horrible memory.

"Of course I'm gonna try to remember the name of my future underling!"

Yeah, I wouldn't count on that ever happening. After the past few days of observing Ted, I'd learned that though he had Crimson Eyes—meaning that he should've been proficient at fire magecraft—he wasn't. First of all, one needed to understand the complex compositions of magecraft, their applications, and their expansions in an instant, meaning that one's intelligence was extremely important. For a kid as simple as Ted, that may have been too great of a burden.

Even so, Ted made up for that with his decent ability with Body Fortification. Unlike elemental magecraft, which required logical thinking, Body Fortification relied on one's primal instincts. For better or worse, Ted's simplemindedness was a good fit for this magecraft.

He let out another yell as he threw a straight punch at me. He seemed to have gotten a little better at this over the past few days. The only caveat was that this was something that anyone could've managed back in my day. He'd progressed from being simply pathetic to somewhat decent.

I caught his arm with my hand and swept his legs out from

under him.

"You're too slow. A snail could've dodged that." He let out a yelp as he rolled a few meters away. "What's the matter? Done already?" I asked, egging him on.

Ted cursed loudly and got back up. What happened next, though, took me by surprise.

"Wah—"

"Hey!"

Him getting up so quickly spelled disaster. He slipped on the piled-up snow and fell backwards off the roof. *Oh no. That's bad.* He'd even fallen on top of the stone paving. Fortunately, he was very sturdy, so this wasn't enough to kill him.

"Ow!" he moaned as tears began to spill out of his eyes.

Oh, looks like he broke his leg when he landed. Phew, glad it's nothing too serious. Back in my day, getting a couple of broken bones was almost a daily occurrence. It would've been another thing if he'd damaged an organ, but reconnecting bones was much easier than the healing magecraft required to repair one's insides.

"Don't cry. You're a guy." *Although, to be fair, he's also a kid.*

Maybe it was a little much to ask a kid to endure the pain of breaking a bone, though. Also, I couldn't deny that I was partly to blame for his injury. I didn't have a choice. I wasn't great at healing magecraft, but this level of injury should've been easy enough for me to—

"Ted! Are you okay?!" Frantic, Barth ran over. "Be strong, okay? I'm going to use healing magecraft!"

Barth began casting Heal. *Interesting.* Even though he didn't have Ashen Eyes, he was able to use healing magecraft, albeit one of the more rudimentary ones. Maybe I'd underestimated him. He may have had potential...or not?

"U-Uh... What are you doing?"

"What, never seen healing magecraft before? Anyway, mind shutting up? I'm trying to focus!"

This isn't good. Healing magecraft was like working with building blocks. The higher the level of healing magecraft, the stronger of a base you needed for it to succeed. It was very delicate, so naturally you'd want to ensure it had a good foundation to prevent it from falling apart. And yet...it was like he was forcing pieces together, gluing them haphazardly and trying to finish this as quickly as possible. I couldn't bear to watch. I was beginning to

think he hated his little brother. The way he was doing it would make nerve endings rub against each other, causing pain.

Ted screamed in agony.

"Are you okay? I know it hurts, but hold on!"

Even I felt bad for Ted. He looked like he was about to pass out from the shoddy healing job that his own brother was subjecting him to.

"I think you've healed him enough. Maybe you should take him to a doctor."

Barth had honestly made any further treatment more complicated than it would've been if he'd just left it alone. But there was still time. If he got the appropriate treatment, he'd be able to fully recover.

"Wait. Before that... You."

"Me?" *Take him to the doctor already!* Your shoddy healing job did more harm than good.

"How'd he get hurt?"

"He fell while we were playing."

"You mean, you *pushed* him, don't you?"

"Uh...what?"

"I was watching. You swept his leg."

"If you were watching, you would've seen what happened after that. When Ted tried to get up, he slip—"

"That's *Lord* Ted, to you!"

Good grief. What is up with this (older) rich brat? This wasn't the time to get hung up on something so trivial.

"You're a commoner and Ted's a noble. Regardless of how young he is, he's the legitimate second son of our house, the Rhangbalts."

"Okay... And?"

"What's with that attitude?!"

"Commoner, noble—none of that matters right now. Take Ted to the doctor already so he can rest."

"It 'doesn't matter'?!" Barth clenched his fist quietly, obviously furious. "You backwater fool with Inferior Eyes! I will make you rue the day you decided to disrespect nobles!" Barth then threw something at me.

I had a faint memory of what this meant—it was a very old tradition.

"I challenge you to a duel to defend the honor of the nobles

you've besmirched. And unfortunately for you, I show no mercy to insolent scoundrels like yourself!"

To be honest, from what he'd said, I already got the feeling this was where things were headed. It seemed the situation was only going to get more complicated with this older noble brat intervening, completely oblivious to what was really going on.

"Wait. I don't have any reason to fight you."

In the first place, he was an inconsequential existence to me. There was no way I was ever going to lose to him. We could've fought tens of thousands of times without him winning even once. But also, I wanted to spend my time living peacefully. Even right now, the townspeople were beginning to gather round due to the commotion. It was best if I didn't earn their ire.

"I-Insolence! Do you mean to ridicule a noble's honor as well?!"

He was seething. *I guess he* is *just a child.* Telling an angry kid to not be angry was pointless. *Well, what to do…?* Accepting and ending the duel just as quickly as it started would have drawn too much attention. And I had a feeling that the angrier Barth got, the more attention he'd attract. I exhaled deeply—really deeply—before uttering my next words.

"Fine. I accept your duel."

I didn't have a choice. I'd play along with Barth's stupid duel. I'd been wanting to get a taste of how strong nobles were nowadays. I'd have to be sure not to use any flashy magic, though. That way, I could probably avoid drawing a lot of attention to myself.

He chuckled. "Very well, I'll explain the rules! We'll face each other one-on-one. The first person to yield loses. Since there's an age difference, I'll give you a handic—"

"Yeah, yeah. I don't need a handicap. Let's just get this over with."

I was much more concerned about Ted's injury than this duel. As the person who was partially to blame for hurting him, I had a responsibility to heal him.

"Wha— Just how far will you go to mock me?!"

Oh no. This is bad. My attitude had apparently had the opposite effect on him, throwing him into an even bigger fit of rage. He was now shaking with anger and emanating a very palpable desire to kill me.

"Fine. I'll make you regret humiliating me!" He unsheathed the

sword at his hip.

Huh. The blade was a little bit longer than any a kid should've had. Most likely it was a sword for adults. However, the construction of it seemed slightly different from a normal sword.

"Wind Edge!"

He swung his blade down and simultaneously released a slicing wind. *Not too shabby.* The force behind the attack was average, but the speed with which it'd come out was unbelievably fast. I was the only one who could compose magecraft this quickly back in my day. This led me to believe that his speed had something to do with the sword he was holding. There had to have been something in its construction that allowed for a child like Barth to quickly produce magecraft in this way.

“Your surprise... It tells me that this is the first time you’re seeing a Regalia.”

A what? Is that the name of the sword?

“I have no words. How did you get through life without ever learning about Regalias? You must’ve lived in a very remote area...”

“You’re a little off base there...” Now that I thought about it, explaining exactly where I was from would be hard. I doubted it’d be easy to get people to accept that I’d actually come from two hundred years in the past. “But yeah, I guess I’ve never seen that before.”

“Then allow me to educate you about Regalias, in lieu of a handicap. They are magecraft-composition support items,” Barth said, as he swung the sword. “Thanks to this, I am able to generate magecraft at oppressive speeds.”

He threw another Wind Edge at me, which I lightly dodged while taking a good look at the sword in his hands. Next, I activated Body Fortification, enhancing my vision to inspect the blade properly. *Oh, I see. So that’s how it is.* Apparently, the sword he was using had a spell set in it. In other words, he didn’t have to compose the spell himself. All he had to do was pour mana into the item, and hey presto: the spell would activate.

“What do you think of this speed? Can you keep up, unarmed as you are?”

How do I put this...? It’s a very well-constructed toy. That was my only thought. To my eyes, it was nothing more than a cane that an elderly person might use to get around. Within the context of composing magecraft, there was absolutely no way that using a Regalia was the right thing to do. After all, the best part of being a mage was coming up with the most appropriate spell compositions for each and every battle.

“How do you like my power?!” Barth yelled, sending attack after attack at me.

But I didn’t feel intimidated in the least. I thought his attacks were slow, particularly because he was using a sword unsuited to his size. I easily dodged his attacks and put some distance between us. Still, he continued to throw Wind Edge after Wind Edge at me.

“How stupid...” I was getting bored of this.

“Wha—” As I slapped his next Wind Edge away with my bare

hand, he started. “Y-You stopped my attack with your hand?!”

It had taken me a while, but I’d finally figured out what had been bothering me this whole time. Regalias were the missing piece to the puzzle of why the level of modern mages had fallen so far. It made sense to have invented them in the pursuit of convenience, but that had been their downfall. The instant they’d begun to rely on these items, it had made them so much weaker.

They must’ve believed that so long as they had Regalias, they didn’t have to compose spells themselves. In a world without true enemies like the demons, it was probably more than enough to have simple magecraft that was instantaneous. I found myself feeling kind of sad, though. Back in my time, toys like these magic tools would never have been used. These Regalias had taken the ability to think away from mages.

“You call this magecraft? Maybe if you want to make a pinwheel spin or something, I guess.”

“Y-You! That attitude...” Half crazed with fury, Barth continued firing the same magecraft at me.

Well, I had no choice. I suppose I owed him some thanks for helping me figure out this little mystery. I decided I’d reward his time with *real* magecraft.

“Wind Edge.”

Ultimately, I chose to use the same magecraft that he’d been firing at me. There was a flash, and in the next moment, my attack had pierced his, hitting him squarely and flinging him back into a brick wall, cracking it. Of course, I’d been sure to hold back slightly. I’d crafted the attack with the intention of showing him the large gap between our skills, but I made sure to lower its power. There was no way that someone who relied on Regalias to fight could learn to adapt and overcome an opponent in a battle. I walked over to Barth, who’d fallen to the ground. Just as I thought, he seemed to be just barely hanging onto consciousness, but he wasn’t hurt too badly.

“H-How did I...lose to a commoner like you?”

Oh, right. I almost forgot. The rules of this duel were that the loser had to surrender or be rendered unconscious.

“Are you about ready to surrender?”

“You filthy...Inferior Eyes brat! Who would ever surrender to you?!”

Good grief. He should’ve allotted some of that pride of his to

other areas. If humans staked their pride on things that others had given them rather than things they'd built themselves, it was all over for them. That being said, I wasn't an unreasonable guy. There was no need to keep up this farce. I'd end this "duel" here and now.

Just as I was about to show him mercy, though, he screamed as he was once again slammed into the brick wall, before once again falling to the ground. I looked and saw that a familiar person had apparently landed the kick that'd sealed Barth's fate.

"Uh... Lilith? What are you doing?"

"My apologies, Master Abel. I saw some trash lying around that needed to be dealt with."

Yeah, that's not really what I'm asking about. Was she not employed by this older rich brat's family as a maid? I got the feeling that attacking your employer was not the greatest of ideas.

Barth coughed painfully. "Lilith... Why did you—"

"Silence. Never speak again. I will not allow you to besmirch Master Abel's name any further."

Barth recoiled in fear as Lilith began emanating a killing aura. Hadn't he *just* confessed to Lilith? Had his affection transformed into fear? This was going to scar him psychologically for the rest of his life.

"Master Abel, my deepest apologies. My poor observation is to blame for this situation."

"No, don't worry about it."

"But from what I can glean, it seems that he's said some incredibly rude things to you."

"Yeah, but I don't care about any of the eye insults. I'm used to it. Just let him off the hook."

All the insults he'd hurled at me were nothing compared to what I was used to from the past. Back then, having Amber Eyes often meant people didn't even treat you like a fellow human. Sure, the people of this time held those with Amber Eyes in contempt, but it didn't go any farther than that.

"Hey, you."

"Eek!"

"Show some gratitude for Master Abel's magnanimity. Just this once, I will let this incident go and spare your life."

I completely understood why Barth clammed up. It was probably a mystery to him as to why he, a noble, was in the position of having to be forgiven by someone else. But he knew that

if it'd spell the end for him if he said anything more. He understood that Lilith wasn't joking about killing him, so he held his tongue.

"Hic... Hic... Wahhh!"

Having realized there was no other action he could take, he began to bawl. Poor kid. He fell to the ground and began wailing in a most unseemly manner, tossing away any last shreds of pride he'd had.

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An hour had passed since then, and though it would've been completely in my power to treat Ted's injury, I wanted to see how good modern doctors were, so I left it all to them. Instead, I climbed a tree and peered in through a window to observe how everything was going.

"It will take six months for a full recovery."

"Oh..."

"Young Master, I know how much you'd like to run around, but you must restrain yourself."

Six whole months? That's a lot of time. No matter how bad his older brother had made things with his shoddy healing magecraft, it shouldn't have made Ted's injury get *that* bad. It seemed to me that doctors in this day and age just weren't that good. As soon as I confirmed that the elderly doctor had left the room, I sneaked in through the window.

"Huh? Abel?"

"Yeah, how's the leg doing? All better?"

"Heh heh. Of course. That was nothing but a scratch!"

He might've been acting tough, but he couldn't hide how tired he was. Sure enough, after not too long, he dozed right off. *He looks so ugly when he sleeps.* His face really lacked any glimmer of intelligence.

"Well, I'm not waiting six months."

I drew out a few spells in the air.

My first act was dispelling the poorly done Lesser Healing. Next was reconstructing the spell and redoing Heal, while activating Recovery to run parallel to it. Finally, I altered Body Fortification to amplify the strength of Heal.

This should do it. I'd undone Barth's shoddy healing job and properly cast magecraft to reconnect the bones, before making Heal

more effective. He'd be right as rain in no time.

"Sorry, Ted. I'm not that patient of a guy."

It went without saying that I didn't care one bit about whatever injuries his brother had sustained. I wasn't about to lose my daily exercise partner, though. He was still incredibly useful to me. *Get better soon, Ted, so that you can do more work for me.*

◇

"Hm? Who's there?"

It'd been a day since the duel, and now standing at the entrance of my home early in the morning was an unfamiliar young boy.

"Wait...are you Barth?"

I honestly wasn't sure because of his new hairstyle, but if I looked close enough, he still had the same face and clothes as the older noble brat I'd come to know. It was jarring to see him, though, because his hair had been mercilessly shaved off. He looked so pitiful.

"Insolent knave! How many times must I tell you that it's *Lord* — Ow!"

A man with a mane—no, a beard like a lion—smacked Barth on the head from behind. He had the same dirty-blond hair as Ted, but had Azure Eyes, signifying an affinity for water magecraft.

"Pleasure to make your acquaintance. I am Evans Rhangbalt, Master Abel," said the man. His voice was intimidating, but then he fell to his knees. "Please forgive what occurred the other day, Master Abel! I'm begging you—please forgive my fool of a son!"

Huh? Say what now? Forgive him for what? It's not like I'm not angry or anything.

"Father! Why are you prostrating yourself before this commoner with inferior eyes?! He's nothing but the little brother of the maid we hired!"

"You fool! Watch your mouth!"

Another sound rang out as a fist came into contact with Barth's head. It was a good punch; he'd really put his weight into that one. Ted had most likely inherited his physical strength from his father.

"Listen, Barth. This is a good time to tell you the truth! *We* did not hire Lady Lilith! *She* hired *us*!"

"Huh...?" Barth looked dumbfounded by his father's words.

So that's how it is. I get it now. I'd been wondering about why a

high-class demon like Lilith would ever serve humans. No matter how much times had changed, it was hard to imagine that a demon would ever work for a human, so why was Lilith doing so? Most likely, she'd become privy to a certain dirty secret and was holding that over their heads. Living among humans presented certain obstacles to demons, but if they had access to the resources and authority of human nobles, then it was completely feasible.

"Master Abel, please find it in your generous heart to forgive him!"

He was *really* prostrating himself right now. Even Barth was following suit, although probably not by choice. His father had forced his head down, though I could still see an expression of humiliation on his face. What dirt did Lilith have on them to make a proud noble go this far to beg for forgiveness? I'd need to ask her later.

"Raise your head. I wasn't angry to begin with."

"We are not worthy of your magnanimity! Thank you!" Evans proceeded to dig his head even farther into the ground.

Uh, I said to raise *your head, didn't I?* Like father, like son. Neither of them were about to win any prizes for listening to others.

"What *are* you? Seriously! *Who* are you?!" Barth, on the verge of tears, moaned while being forced to bow his sad, bald head to me.

◇◇◇

A large cloud covered the winter night sky, blocking any light from the moon, which made the orange magic lights from the Rhangbalt mansion stand out that much more. At the moment, a young man by the name of Barth Rhangbalt was walking across the long, red-carpeted hall with his fists clenched. The blond hair he'd been so proud of had been shaved off, and his Verdant Eyes looked almost black from how he squinted in anger. He knocked on the dark brown door at the end of the hall and waited until he heard the person on the other side invite him in.

"Excuse my intrusion, father."

The room he'd walked into was the main library. Waiting inside was his father, Evans Rhangbalt, who had a beard like a lion's mane.

"What do you need, this late at night?"

“I will keep my request short, father. I’d like you to expel Lilith and Abel from our territory.”

Evans had not been expecting this and was at a loss for words. Eventually, he shook his head.

“No.”

“Why not?! Expel those infidels!”

“Do you not remember me saying that Lady Lilith is not a mere maid? I owe her my life. I am not at liberty to go against her wishes.”

“What does that matter?!” Barth screeched into the dark night.

Barth had already heard from his father when he was ten that Lilith was not *just* a maid. The only reason that this village had been able to thrive in a geologically disadvantageous place like this had been thanks to Lilith’s specific instructions and advice.

“We don’t need to rely on those lowlifes anymore! Our family controls this territory. There should be no issue forcing them out now!”

“That’s where you’re wrong, Barth.”

“What exactly am I wrong about?!”

“Daddy? Barth? What are you two doing? I can hear you from out there.” A sleepy Ted in pajamas appeared in the doorway. A cast for healing purposes had been firmly wrapped around his injured leg.

“You can walk, Ted?!” Barth exclaimed.

“Yeah, look! All better now!”

Ted looked indifferent to Barth’s utter surprise. However, Evans seemed to understand something from the situation.

“Barth, Ted... When the time comes, I will tell you the truth about my relation to Lady Lilith and why I pay her so much respect.”

“What reason could a noble like you have for bowing your head to her, father?” Barth asked.

Evans clammed up. He’d planned to tell them that Lilith was a demon, and that was why he was helping to shelter her, but at the moment he could sense that Barth was being spurred on by dark emotions. Even if Barth was his own flesh and blood, Evans had no intention of telling him such a deep secret at this time.

“No answer, huh?”

“As you are now, I am unable to tell you.”

“Fine! Fine, then!” Barth’s mood plummeted at his father’s

vague words. After a little, however, it seemed like he began to calm down. “Father, won’t you send a recommendation on my behalf for me to attend Arthlia Academy of Magecraft?”

Evans slowly shook his head. “I will not. You will remain in these lands and learn how to become a lord. Do you not remember making that promise to me?”

Arthlia Academy of Magecraft was a distinguished school that produced elite mages. However, it took at least five years to graduate, so Evans was hesitant to enroll either of his sons.

“I want to learn stronger magecraft! I want to become stronger and smarter. I want to learn powerful magecraft that will allow me to mercilessly cut down my enemies and anyone else who stands in my way! Then, I will never lose to any commoner—nor any noble, for that matter. I will become the strongest mage!”

Evans was surprised. Until now, he’d seen his son as sensible—calm and collected in any situation. Perhaps he’d only been so sure of this characterization due to the contrast with how energetic his little brother Ted was.

“Barth, you don’t have to push yourself so hard…” Ted began to say.

“Shut up! You’re a disgrace to nobles!” Barth yelled, sending his injured brother flying.

Evans couldn’t believe his eyes. “Stop that, *now*!”

“B-But… I-It’s his fault… It’s his fault for getting friendly with a commoner despite being a noble!” Barth sounded like a child throwing a tantrum, and Evans was beginning to completely rethink his appraisal of his elder son.

Evans was coming to the realization that, with the way Barth was now, he could not in good conscience leave the lordship of their territory to him. In that case, maybe sending him away would be a win-win situation for both Barth and Evans.

“Fine, then. I’ll send in a recommendation for you.”

“You mean it?!”

“Yeah. Go see how big the world is with your own eyes.”

“I knew you’d see my side, father! My thanks!”

After shaking Evans’s hand, Barth left the room. Watching him leave elicited a pain in Evans’s chest as he wondered where he’d gone wrong with Barth’s education.

“Are you all right, Ted…?”

“It hurts a little, but I’m okay.”

“Good.”

Even after being the victim of unreasonable violence, Ted seemed calm. Evans was beginning to realize that perhaps he’d misjudged both his sons. Despite his energetic personality, it was possible that Ted was more mentally mature than his older brother.

“Ted, I think I’ll tell you the truth.”

“Daddy?”

“Ted, you see... I was once rescued by Lady Lilith.”

“Huh?”

“One snowy day, I’d been hunting and was attacked out of nowhere by a monster.”

He decided not to mention just how far into the past this story took place. It was well over twenty years ago when he had become acquainted with Lilith.

“Oh, really?”

“Yeah, and since then, I’ve been in her care. To me, she is like a good neighbor as well as my lifelong teacher.”

The relationship between Lilith and Evans somewhat resembled that of Abel and Ted. The day Lilith had saved Evans, he’d asked her why she was being so kind to him. To that, he received an unexpected answer.

“There will be a day when a person important to me shall awaken. I want to create a peaceful environment in which we may comfortably live.”

At first, he’d thought that she was crazy, but now he understood. The reason she’d saved him from the monster had all been for this day.

“Wow... I didn’t know that maid lady was like that.”

“Yeah. That’s why you can’t become like Barth. Okay, Ted? Be good to Lady Lilith and Master Abel.”

“Of course! Abel is my underling... No, my important friend!”

On one side was Barth, who’d rejected Abel for immature reasons, and on the other, Ted, who’d chosen to accept him. On this day, the difference between the two brothers had become clear.

◇

A month had passed since that day, and I’d lived in complete peace. Each morning I woke up to the sounds of birds chirping, had breakfast with Lilith, and spent most of the afternoon studying in

the library, only taking a break to eat the lunch Lilith prepared for me before napping for an hour. When I woke up from that, I'd hole up in the library again and continue my studies.

The rays of the sun that flowed into the library made me warm and sleepy. I let out a yawn and looked at the window, seeing my own reflection. After that day, I hadn't played tag with the young noble brat at all. I let out a sigh. I couldn't let my body rot from lack of exercise. I looked back at my book, but almost immediately closed it. My ears picked up a loud noise from outside my room that I couldn't ignore.

"Pardon! I look forward to your teachings today as well, Master!" Ted said, flinging open the door to the library.

Though we hadn't played tag since then, he'd still been coming over every day. And there had been one small improvement to my life since my duel with Barth.

"How many times do I have to tell you? Come in *quietly* when I'm reading."

"More importantly, teach me more about the magecraft from yesterday! I've already got the gist of it down!"

The improvement I mentioned was Ted finally beginning to respect me and look up to me as his teacher; he had even ended up calling me "Master."

"Looks like your leg's all better."

"Heh heh, of course! This kinda injury is but a scratch for the great Ted!"

You shouldn't lie. I distinctly remember you bawling your eyes out when you broke your leg.

"In that case, wanna go?"

"Go where?" Ted asked.

I grabbed my scarf and wrapped it around my neck. "Tag."

His eyes began sparkling, like those of a dog realizing you were going to play with them.

"Yeah! I'm gonna win against you today for sure!"

"There's nothing wrong with confidence, but make sure you use the Body Fortification magecraft I taught you yesterday. You got the gist of it, right?"

"Ha ha! Yeah, I got it!"

Answering with confidence was one of his few strengths, but he usually couldn't put his money where his mouth was. I opened the window and a refreshing gust of air blew in, turning the pages of

the books on my desk. And just like that, my peaceful, leisurely life continued.

Chapter 6: Lost Path

And so, two years passed since I'd awoken in the future thanks to my reincarnation magecraft. During that time, I'd observed all kinds of magecraft. That being said, I'd yet to see anything truly impressive in this region. The level of magecraft here had become very subpar since my time.

At first, I'd believed that to be a result of the prominence of Regalias, but the issue seemed more complex than that. It was abnormal for mages to have become *this* weak. I could have asked Lilith to tell me more and draw conclusions from the information she provided, but I figured it'd be better to see and experience things for myself as much as possible. Recently, trying to determine the cause of this decline in magecraft had become my main interest.

"Master Abel, I've made tea."

"Oh. Thanks."

I was sad about the decline in magecraft, but on the other hand, certain revolutionary items had spread across the world. One of these was the heating kettle that Lilith used. In general, magecraft was designed to be proficient at generating instantaneous bursts of power, but not great at maintaining that sort of energy over long periods of time.

"What do you think of my homemade herb tea?"

"Hm. Not bad. The taste is nice."

It was possible that all the more talented mages were working on developing Regalias. In peaceful times like these, what people needed wasn't rigorous training, but convenient, easy-to-use tools. As someone who'd lived through a time of war, I had mixed feelings about this.

"Master! I did it! I finally learned the spell!"

The door slammed open and in came Ted—a boy who was a little shorter than me with dirty-blond hair. He'd been calling me "Master" these past few years while begging me to instruct him in magecraft. He'd certainly come a long way from the days when he'd been rough with his words towards me.

“Okay. Show me.”

“Here? But...”

“You think *I* can’t stop an attack from someone of your level? Just do it.”

I planned to use negation magecraft, which would analyze the opponent’s spell and completely nullify it. The only problem was that you had to be considerably stronger than your opponent, otherwise it wouldn’t work. But this was Ted we were talking about, so it’d be fine.

“Okay, here I go!” Ted closed his eyes and began composing the magecraft in his mind. “Burning Bullet!”

The air shook as a fireball, approximately ten centimeters in diameter, came out of Ted’s hand. I calmly evaluated his magecraft while drinking the tea that Lilith had prepared for me. *I see. Not bad.* It was completely lacking any of the fundamentals and still very low-level in terms of power, but it was very much up to the standards of the modern mage. Plus, I was very happy he wasn’t relying on Regalias, which were essentially toys to me. Wielding them made the user stop thinking about the magecraft being used, which was not good considering how important it was to completely understand it.

“Huh? Huh?! Master, why is my magecraft disappearing?!” Ted screamed with confusion as I negated his spell.

Good grief. Did mages of this era not know what negation magecraft was? The magecraft was limiting because there needed to be a sizable gap between you and your opponent, but it was pretty useful depending on how you used it. It analyzed the composition of a magecraft and then created the opposite composition. You had up until your opponent fired off their spell to negate it. Honestly speaking, it was not very practical. It was extremely effective against imbecilic mages like Ted, but against actually powerful opponents, it wouldn’t be too much help.

“You’ve gotten better, Ted.”

From my perspective, there was little hope with regards to Ted’s talent. He wasn’t very bright either, so I had a tough time teaching him.

“Really?! Yay!”

You’re really that happy to be complimented by me? He began bouncing around the room like an elated puppy.

“Your words honor me, Master! Now I should be ready for

tomorrow's magecraft academy entrance exam!"

"Oh, I didn't know that you had something so important around the corner. You got this."

School, huh? I guess Ted is of that age. Kids really did grow up fast. And he'd very much matured from the spoiled rich brat I'd first met.

"Hm? What do you mean? Ms. Lilith told me that you're coming with me."

"Huh?" I reflexively tilted my head.

Me? I'm *going to take a magecraft academy's entrance exam?* Back in my day, I was called the Peerless Prodigy. Why would someone who was unparalleled in magecraft ability need to go to school? *Good grief. This is a horrible joke.*

"Lilith, what's this about me taking the entrance exam for a magecraft academy?" It was possible that she'd done all this on her own, without even asking me.

Lilith's expression turned cold as she answered my question while continuing to wash the dishes. "Allow me to ask you instead what your plans are for the future, if you do not intend to attend school?"

"Isn't that obvious? I'm gonna travel the world with other adventurers, just like I did in the past."

"I regret to inform you, but as of ten years ago, there is no longer any such job as an 'adventurer.'"

"Wha—" The truth hit me like a rock.

Oh, I see. None of the books in the library were recent, so they didn't contain any modern information. *Okay. That makes sense.* In my time, being an adventurer was a job where you took down monsters and sold the materials obtained from them to the guild. But the amount of monsters in the modern world had dwindled quite a bit, likely making the adventurer job superfluous.

"You'd like to work in a job that uses magecraft in the future, right? If so, then you must first graduate from school. Please remember, this is a time of peace. Do you understand?"

I did, but that didn't mean I accepted it. How sad was it that I had to go to school after all these years? I doubted there was a professor alive who could teach me anything. This was rough.

"Or perhaps you intend to live your life utterly and entirely dependent on me? I wouldn't mind, personally, but..."

"Fine. I'll do it. I'll take the test. You happy now?"

I had no choice. It was true that I'd been living off of Lilith this entire time without providing anything in return. I wasn't too interested in becoming a guy who lived by leeching off a woman. No, I had to think positively. This could be a good opportunity to broaden my knowledge about the world.

Chapter 7: Written Exam

And then came the day of the exam. We traveled by horse-drawn carriage for almost half a day, going over countless mountains to get to the royal capital, Midgard, which was separated into five districts. The eastern district faced the port and had the marketplace and manufacturing sections of town. The northern and southern districts had cultivated lands and more merchants, as well as the living quarters of the general populace. The central district was where all the nobles lived. The western district had all the various academies and research facilities. *Very nice.*

The academy towered over us, its appearance as dignified as a castle's. From what I had heard, Arthlia Academy of Magecraft was the most storied building in all of Midgard. *Huh. It really looks the part of the kingdom's most prestigious school.* It didn't just *look* old; it had an air to it of history and tradition. As we passed through the castle gates with designs of silver dragons upon them, I suddenly remembered Lilith's words.

"Master Abel, Arthlia Academy of Magecraft is a gathering of this country's elite. I humbly ask that you remain vigilant," she'd said when I left the house.

I was confident I wouldn't fail a test designed for students, but still, I decided I'd be careful.

"Whoa... No family crest on his clothes. Is he the rumored Inferior Eyes?"

Immediately, I felt the gaze of everyone around fall on me as we climbed the hill to the school gates.

"How horrible. What a stain on the prestige of Arthlia."

"Commoners should remember their place and cultivate a field or something."

I see... Just a quick glance was enough to tell me that everyone here was low-level. Another way of saying that was that they all seemed to be the epitome of the modern mage. Judging by their uniforms, they were most likely current students. But I couldn't let my guard down. Talented mages could hide their actual ability. It

was better to be on the safe side and exercise caution.

"Why's an Inferior Eyes taking our entrance exam?"

"Apparently some rich family gave a large donation to get him a recommendation."

"So he's not here legitimately then? What's the point when he's gonna fail, anyway?"

"Oh, but what if he paid off the exam proctor too?"

It seemed that no matter what time I lived in, people always held prejudice against those with Amber Eyes. Even in this kingdom, which was supposed to be filled with the most educated elites, prejudice still ran rampant. How troublesome.

"These bastards are running their mouths. Can they only judge people by the color of their eyes?!"

Good grief. I never thought the day would come where Ted of all people would be cheering me up. I'd really lost my edge. *But also, you were just like them yourself, not too long ago.* I decided to keep that to myself, though.

Just as I had that thought, I heard a voice from behind us. "All of you nobles should be ashamed!" a girl who looked self-assured barked from behind us.

Her hair was as bright red as the setting sun. Her Crimson Eyes glimmered like garnets. Her clothes bore a crest with a dragon and a sword on it. *That must be her family crest.* I felt like I'd seen it before, but nothing immediately came to mind.

"Nobles gossiping about commoners behind their backs is disgraceful!"

Is she also a student here? She was a little more physically developed than what I'd expect for a student, though. She didn't look like a prospective student either.

"Who do you think you are?" someone demanded.

"I'm Eliza. I will graduate from this academy as the top student in five years and become a mage who will be remembered for generations to come!" the girl declared, sticking out her large chest with pride.

“What’s your problem? Have you no manners?”

“Wanna go, kid? We’ll teach you a thing or two about manners before your entrance exam.”

It was obvious that the upperclassmen were pissed off by the way she’d stood up to them. For a moment, I thought about helping her, but I immediately realized that there was no need. After all, she clearly outclassed them.

“Who’ll teach whom, I wonder?” She gave them an eerie grin as she drew her sword from its sheath on her hip.

Hm, she seems to be pretty handy with a blade. I didn’t think she was just talk. This felt like the first time in a while that I’d genuinely been impressed by someone.

“Eek!”

Moments later, they’d all been knocked to their butts, and found her sword pointed at their throats.

“Get lost. Now!”

“P-Pardon us!” The three upperclassmen skittered off into the distance while Eliza glared at them with her flaming-red Crimson Eyes.

Good grief. We hadn’t even begun the exam and already we’d been dragged into trouble.

“Hey. You,” I called to her from behind.

Though I hadn’t asked for it, I couldn’t deny that she’d helped me out. It was only good manners for me to thank her somehow. As soon as I reached out to stop her from leaving, though, my hand was smacked away.

“You really think a commoner like you can touch me? Know your place!”

“Uh…”

Come again? Looking into her eyes, I saw even more prejudice than I had in the students from before.

“Uh… Weren’t you helping me out?”

“Where’d you get that idea from? I just hate people talking behind others’ backs! But I don’t remember permitting a commoner like you to speak to me!” *Oh, give me a break! Is this academy filled with people like her?* “Listen, commoner! If you want me to notice you, become the strongest here. I’ve no interest in anyone but the strong,” she spat, before leaving.

Good grief. I was surprised to see that there were still people like her in this world, that were so fixated on strength.

"Master! Wh-Who was that girl?!"

"No clue. How would I know?"

That being said, I had a feeling that I'd met her before. As I passed through the school gate, I started searching through my memories, trying to remember if I'd ever befriended a girl with flowing red hair.

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The entrance exam for Arthlia Academy had two components to it—a written test and a practical test. Each had a total of a hundred possible points, meaning that your final score was out of two hundred. The room was filled with the pleasant sound of pens scratching against paper.

The test consisted of three subjects: General Culture, Magecraft Syntax, and Magecraft Engineering. The first subject, General Culture, was very easy for me. It tested the examinee's reading comprehension skills, as well as their grasp of simple math, using numbers and figures. These kinds of things were tested back in my day as well, and it didn't seem like anything had really changed. Essentially, there was nothing I could get wrong in this section of the test.

Magecraft Syntax almost felt like they were ridiculing me—that's how easy it was. Not only was the level of modern mages low, but the level of their students was low as well. I fought back yawns as I answered the questions. I couldn't imagine myself losing even a single point here. In fact, I found four mistakes that the testmaker had made.

Finally, there was Magecraft Engineering. It was harder than the other two subjects. I could almost feel the sadistic personality of whoever had made it. But just because it was harder than the other subjects, that didn't mean it was hard for me. *Good grief.* At this rate, I was almost sure that I'd get a perfect score. All I had to do was finish this problem and then I'd be done with the written exam...

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Question 12: Depornix's Final Theorem: Prove that
it is impossible to create a human soul with
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magecraft.

Huh? This is completely different from any of the other questions on this test. It was a lot harder than anything I'd encountered up to this point. Most likely, this question had been included to stop anyone from getting a perfect score. I could feel my lips curling into a smile. After all, *I'd* been the one who had made this question in the first place.

When I was ten years old, everyone was really interested in human transmutation. Mages everywhere had searched for a way to produce a human soul. There had even been a well-known mage who'd killed a large number of humans for the sake of his experiment. It'd been a big societal problem. He and everyone else during that time period were idiots. It was impossible for magecraft to produce a soul.

That's why, in an attempt to stop that pointless boom of interest in creating souls, I'd used a fake name and published "Depornix's Last Theorem." Well, as an extension of that research, I'd perfected my reincarnation magecraft, so I guess it hadn't been that pointless for me after all.

But anyway, though this test question was objectively harder than the others, it might as well have been a freebie to me. After all, I'd been the first to solve it when I was barely even ten years old. The name Depornix had come from an old couple's dog in the neighborhood I lived in. But that was something only I would ever know.

Thinking back, though, my theorem had been unnecessarily wordy, not to mention incomplete. *Good grief.* Sure, I may have been a kid, but it was embarrassing to look back on that and know that I'd put it out into the world.

After writing what I knew about the theorem's flaws, I finished the test.

Chapter 8: Practical Exam

After the three-hour written test came to an end, we began the practical exam.

"The written test really lived up to the school's reputation. Can't believe how hard it was!"

"Hm? You think so?" I glanced at Ted as he stood next to me, looking as though he was on the verge of death.

Apparently, he hadn't done too hot on the test. Given that he wasn't exactly the sharpest tool in the shed, though, I wasn't about to take what he said about the difficulty of the test to heart. More than likely, all the test takers here today would easily get full points in most of the subjects.

"Examinees one to forty, please follow me," a proctor called out.

My number was twenty-seven and Ted's was twenty-eight. It seemed that the next test would evaluate the strength of our magecraft abilities, but I wasn't exactly sure how they intended to do that.

"Master, let's go!"

Ted hurried me along to the next test area, and not too long after, we exited the building into the extremely spacious grounds behind the school. This area was probably used mainly for testing out spells. Upon closer inspection, I saw that there were some targets set up, most likely for practicing one's aim with spells.

"In this test, you will use the Regalia we've prepared for you. Please select the Regalia that corresponds to your eye color."

Various weapons had been prepared for us in a tent, including swords, guns, and manifers—a type of gauntlets. Going in numerical order, everyone selected the Regalia matching their eye color. I wasn't surprised in the least to discover that they hadn't prepared any weapons that were compatible with Amber Eyes, though, so I ended up choosing a red sword. Out of all the items available, it had the most basic, standard shape. Also, although people with Amber Eyes were able to use any magecraft at the

highest level as long as they had enough training, each individual would still have personal affinities for certain types of magecraft.

In my case, I was a little bit on the weaker side when it came to the healing magecraft of Ashen Eyes, but I was proficient at all elemental magecraft. That being said, I was still good enough at healing magecraft to have realized something as unprecedented as reincarnation magecraft.

"Hey, look at that kid with Inferior Eyes."

"Ha ha ha! He just picked out something random since there's nothing there that matches his eyes."

I could feel the glares of the other examinees on me. *Good grief.* I hadn't chosen this weapon at random. It seemed like everyone present at this test was prejudiced against Amber-Eyed mages too.

"Allow me to begin the explanation for today's exam, which will focus on gauging the raw strength of your magecraft."

Interesting. Measuring the strength of the examinees wasn't anything too surprising. Since they'd provided everyone with Regalias, it wouldn't be possible for them to judge everyone's ability to compose spells. In essence, rather, they would be measuring how efficiently one could output magecraft, using the mana pool they were born with.

"The targets we've set up for this test are very durable, so there's no fear of them breaking. With that in mind, please do not hold anything back when you fire your spells at them."

Considering the fact that we were being told the targets were unbreakable, they must have been tampered with in some way to make them so. *Oh, how fun.* It was another perfect chance to gauge how strong modern mages were.

"When you're ready, please step forward."

"Oh, me! Me! I wanna go first!" Ted insisted, enthusiastically raising his hand.

Judging by how fired up he was, it was probably safe to assume that he wanted a chance to make up for how poorly he may have done on the written exam.

"Okay, then we'll start with applicant number eighteen."

"Yeah! I'm first!"

Are you going to be okay? Sure, he was under my tutelage, but he was still basically an amateur. According to Lilith, this academy was a gathering place for elites from all over the country. At this rate, he was going to spectacularly embarrass himself in front of all

of them.

Ted moved to the designated spot and readied his fists, wielding the manifers he'd picked out.

"All right, begin."

"Fireball!"

Ted swung his fist forward and let out a ball of fire. *Yeesh, that's pathetic.* The spell he'd released was, objectively speaking, extremely low-level. In other words, it was a disaster, but that was to be expected. He was not that high-level of a mage, plus he was using a Regalia that he wasn't familiar with. It was only natural that the magecraft he produced was low-level too.

"Ding!"

The spell he'd fired was absorbed into the target. *I see. It has ore in it that absorbs magecraft. So they're using Dark Matter, huh?* It made sense. If they made the targets with dark materials, they could ensure that the impact of the spell was mostly absorbed, thereby preventing any serious damage. In my days, there wasn't a reliable supply of the stuff, but it seemed like they'd overcome that in the present day.

"Huh?!" Multiple applicants exclaimed with surprise.

See? What'd I say? Nobody here can believe how weak that was.

"Marvelous! You have so much talent! Why is someone like you taking the general admittance exam?!"

Uh...what did the proctor just say? I *had* to have misheard. There was nothing about what Ted had done that should've made anyone think he was talented.

"I can't believe this. He's from the Rhangbalt family, right? The nobles that live out in the sticks?"

"This is the worst... How are we supposed to follow *that* up?"

This is a joke, right? I'm being pranked. But it seemed that the audience around us was entirely serious. This low level of magecraft was *actually* perceived as "marvelous" and deserving of praise.

"Such talent... We might just be seeing the birth of a once-in-a-century prodigy." A veteran proctor who was more than likely a supervisor blew out smoke as he spoke these words.

Ted?! A prodigy?! A once-in-a-century *prodigy?!* Late though my reaction was, the reality of the situation was finally sinking in, reminding me once again just how low the ability of mages around me now was.

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As the test went on, it felt like I was dreaming with my eyes open. Like I was standing at a glorified playground for little kids.

"Fireball!"

"Wind Edge!"

"Ice Needle!"

The applicants fired off their respective attacks with the Regalias they'd picked out. With how weak they were, though, I had reservations about letting any of what I was seeing fall under the purview of magecraft. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought that, even while using a support item like a Regalia, there would one day be people who couldn't even properly manipulate magecraft. Thinking back, this made Barth—the older spoiled rich brat—an exemplary mage by their standards.

"Okay then... Will the last applicant, number twenty-seven—Abel—please step forward?" I was asked in a strangely kind tone.

Good grief. Apparently it wasn't just the other kids who looked

down on me for having Amber Eyes, and had no expectations for me. I was extremely concerned for the future if this was the attitude of the people who were tasked with nurturing and educating young mages.

"All right," I said shortly, moving towards the designated spot.

"Okay, go ahead."

My evaluation had begun, but I wasn't sure how best to proceed. Simply casting standard magecraft like they wanted me to would've been boring. *Hm... How about I make a few slight changes to the composition, and nonchalantly show them what I can do?*

"Hey, look at that Amber-Eyed commoner."

"Ha ha ha, he's spending so much time just to cast something as simple as Fireball. I guess that's what you'd expect from Inferior Eyes, though."

I was too focused to pay any attention to the hecklers. I began revising and improvising the magical composition of the magecraft, smoothing out all the rough edges and making it balanced.

Spell Velocity: Fastest

Magecraft Strength: Maximum

Magecraft Variation: Scattershot

Ah... Almost forgot something important.

Remove limiter.

Okay. That should do it. All that was left was to aim at the target and fire. Though the magecraft was already pretty common and nothing to write home about, I made sure to lower its strength further after taking into account the ability level of the mages gathered here.

"Fireball: Spread Rain."

The air trembled as a fireball roughly a meter in diameter appeared from the tip of the sword I was holding. But since that alone was kind of boring, I'd modified the magecraft so that it would scatter in midair.

The fireball flew up in the air before scattering, crashing down on the target like a fiery rain.

Uh, what? I thought the targets were unbreakable. Maybe they'd only meant that in the sense that a student couldn't break it, so the school had used dark matter of poor quality. That was the only explanation I could come up with, because otherwise, there was no way that dark matter would melt like that.

"A-A-A-Ahh..."

Hm? What's going on?

The proctor standing next to me looked like she was still trying to process what'd just happened. She'd fallen to the ground and her gaze was trembling.

"Wh-What was that...?"

"What just happened? Why's there a field of fire?"

All of the applicants looked at me, mouthing off in surprise. *Was the magecraft I used that rare? No way, right?* Adapting Spread Rain into one's magecraft composition was like, *the* most basic thing there was. It didn't matter how low their level as mages was; there was no way I was the only one here who could use it.

"H-How can an Inferior Eyes like him use magecraft like that?!" one of the examinees cried out pathetically, still lying on the ground where he'd fallen.

Oh, now I get it. Their exaggerated reactions were because they were surprised that a mage with Amber Eyes could even produce magecraft normally. *Well, I'm glad I got to change your view of Amber Eyes!*

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Originally, Arthlia Academy of Magecraft was a deteriorating public library, which was then revamped into a school. Taking a closer look at the stone that made up its walls, as pale as the scales of a white dragon, it was easy to see that the school was actually a combination of three different libraries. The inside of each building was made sturdy with Dark Matter in order to prevent any magical outbursts from destroying them.

Hm. I shouldn't be too surprised given how prestigious the school is, but it's impressive how well this building is built. No wonder it's famous across the country for its construction.

Currently, Abel and the others were in the B hall, which was on the opposite side of the campus from where they'd taken their practical exam. Sitting there in the A hall with a bored expression on her face and sighing was a certain girl with flowing crimson hair.

Her name was Eliza. With her overwhelming ability and beauty, she was already garnering the scorn of other applicants.

"That's her, right? The one who defended the commoner."

"Kinda unpleasant, right? What house is she even from?"

“I’ve never seen her crest. She’s probably from some hick noble family.”

These kinds of baseless rumors had been swirling around the room like a storm, and Eliza heard every last word of them.

Based on their quality, it’s hard to imagine that any of these applicants are in the highest echelons, she thought.

If their only strength was talking behind someone’s back, then there was no need to pay heed to them. As far as she could guess, fewer than half of those gathered in this hall would pass. Regardless of whether or not they’d become alumni of this school, though, she had no intention of involving herself with them in the future, so she decided to ignore them entirely.

“Applicant eighty-six, please step forward.”

“Yes.” Eliza, hearing her number, stood at attention.

“State your name.”

In both the A and B halls, the practical test was conducted in the same way. The only difference was that the proctor here called the applicants up in numerical order.

“I’m applicant number eighty-six, Eliza. Thank you for your consideration.”

The hall began buzzing as they observed her. She had flowing crimson hair, and smooth, porcelain skin. Her eyes shone like polished rubies and were as fierce as fire. She was the epitome of elegance. But what stood out the most was the beautiful way she bowed.

She may have interpreted the chatter as ridicule, but it wasn’t. Everyone there was in awe of her perfect features and posture, which were as dignified and graceful as someone from a storied noble family. Even the proctor had noticed. Despite being a woman herself, she couldn’t help but gasp at Eliza’s beauty.

“May I begin?”

“Y-Yes. Please go ahead.”

After receiving permission from the proctor, Eliza readied her Regalia, which was just as red as her eyes.

“Flame Edge!”

As soon as she did, the air trembled. She’d instantly modified the Regalia’s preloaded magecraft composition in order to increase its damage output, piercing the target.

“Wh-What? She damaged dark matter?!” the proctor cried out with disbelief.

The display of power wasn't lost on everyone else present either—it was as clear as day how strong she was.

How boring. They must be extremely low-level if they're making a fuss over this, Eliza thought, exhaling.

But then she noticed that something was amiss. In the back of the venue, about twenty meters away, an instructor had come running in, her face pale.

Body Fortification: Auditory Boost. Eliza strengthened her hearing in order to get to the bottom of what was going on.

"Ms. Fedia, it's an emergency. Please, come quick!"

A young-looking instructor approached the white-robed examiner who was obviously the exam's supervisor.

Hm. So that arrogant-looking proctor's name is Fedia? What's the emergency, though?

"What's the emergency? Be brief," Fedia demanded.

The young instructor grimaced before continuing. "Well...the dark matter targets have been blown to bits by...by an Amber-Eyed examinee."

Eliza had to do a double take. But the more she listened, the more she began to doubt her own common sense. Apparently, the boy in question had not only blown the targets to bits, but had burned the entire field down as well.

"What's their name? What family are they from?"

"Well... It seems he's not a noble, but he's from the Rhangbalt region, and his name is..."

As soon as she heard the boy's name, Eliza was struck with excitement and anticipation. *Abel.* The instructor had said it in a low voice, but without a doubt, that was the name she'd heard. She couldn't understand how someone with Inferior Eyes, which was supposed to have absolutely no affinity for any elements, could have produced magecraft that would stun everyone in this way. A strong sense of rivalry began burning in Eliza's chest towards the boy named Abel.

Chapter 9: The Final Test

Having completed the strength measurement portion of the practical test, we left and headed to the next venue for the final test.

"Master! Am I amazing or what?! Did you hear? I got an A!"

As much as I knew that it was unavoidable since an A was the highest possible grade, I couldn't help but feel a little depressed that we were considered the same level of mage, at least on paper.

"So this is the room where the other A-ranked people are supposed to be?"

Ted had been emphasizing the "A" ever since he'd received it. He must've been very happy to have gotten a grade that reflected their high appraisal of his skills.

The doorknob clicked as it turned. There were a little over twenty people inside, from the looks of things. Apparently, some of the nobles in the room knew each other already, and were casually conversing. The mood was very relaxed...until they saw me. As soon as we entered, a silence fell over the room. *Hm? What's going on?* They had all clammed up, hanging their heads awkwardly.

"I think it's because they heard rumors of how you destroyed the dark matter, Master."

"Oh, I see."

It was uncomfortable, but at the very least it didn't seem like they intended me any harm, so I could ignore them. I sat in a chair and exhaled lightly. Most likely, all the nobles present were elites who were extremely prideful. There was probably a mix of people who were frustrated to have lost to a commoner and others who resented me for making waves as a commoner. Then there were still others who were in denial about having lost to my skills.

"Hey, you." A girl approached me.

It was the same person with crimson hair that I'd met at the school gate. I sighed a little and ignored her.

"Excuse me?! How dare you act that way towards me! Don't you know what an honor it is for me to go out of my way to talk to

you?! At least *look* at me!"

"Good grief. I could've sworn that a certain *someone* warned me that, as a commoner, I should hold my tongue and not get a big head and act all friendly with you."

It wasn't as if I held a grudge towards her, but I also wasn't interested in getting involved with anything troublesome. I very much wanted to extract myself from this situation and have nothing more to do with her.

"I like your attitude, but you can set that aside right now for the sake of my honor. I don't particularly care about status or anything like that. I hate weaklings, that's all," Eliza said, sticking out her chest, which was strangely large for someone her age.

I see. I suppose she did say that she was only interested in the strong. It was true that there were commoner mages who were exceptionally strong, but there were far more noble mages who were. So her sole interest in those who were strong was both similar and different from the general disdain nobles held for commoners.

"Wow. Good for you," I said, turning the page in the book I was reading while trying to make it painfully obvious I wasn't interested in continuing the conversation.

"So anyway, is it true? I heard that you turned the dark matter targets into dust," she asked, sitting next to me without any reservations.

"Hm. I couldn't say."

"How did you handle the composition of the magecraft? Did you append it? I heard that Amber-Eyed mages can't properly control magecraft, but is there a specific type of magecraft that you excel at? Did you train under some kind of famous mage?"

Good grief. It appeared that this Eliza girl couldn't take a hint. But I didn't miss the way her eyes sparkled when she began talking about magecraft. It would have been easy for me to answer her questions, but I didn't really feel like it. I hated troublesome things more than anything. I could already tell that if I let myself get involved with her, things would become a pain. Fortunately, I had an ally who came to my rescue.

"Hello everyone, please be seated. I will go over the rules for the final exam."

The doors to the waiting room we were in opened and a woman with Ashen Eyes, who looked like the supervisor for the entire exam, entered. Her white coat gave me the impression she was a

mage who specialized in healing magecraft.

"How unfortunate. Looks like we'll have to continue this conversation another time," I said sarcastically.

"Hmph. Fine. You're off the hook for now, but this test will give me the answers I want," Eliza said cryptically before returning to her seat.

Hm? What is she talking about? Apparently she was already familiar with the particulars of how we would be tested. However, I'd only discover the meaning behind her words after hearing the explanation for the final exam.

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The proctor began writing the details of how the final test would be conducted on the blackboard.

Since ancient times, people have waged battles over various things and for various reasons—disputes about women, territory, or even life itself. Even while engaged in warfare with the demons, humans had continued to fight amongst each other. And after all this petty squabbling, a certain custom, known as "dueling," emerged.

"Your final test will be a mock duel to test your practical magecraft skills. Let me begin by saying that your outcome in this battle will heavily affect your chances of admittance."

The room was calmer than I'd expected given the fact that they'd just announced that we'd have to duel each other. *I see. This must be the final test every year.* And my hypothesis was proven by how everyone present had silently accepted what the proctor said, without any fuss.

"Allow me to explain the three rules."

She began to write them on the board.

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1. Duels must be one-on-one.
2. Whoever has their defensive barrier, which will
be created by the proctor, destroyed first loses.
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"We will now cast a defensive barrier spell on each of you. It can handle multiple weaker attacks, but it will be destroyed if it takes even a single powerful spell. Be sure to keep that in mind and exert caution." She began casting the barrier magecraft on herself to

demonstrate.

I see. These are reasonable parameters for a mock duel. The only problem was that the barrier spell being cast didn't inspire too much confidence, but with the other students being as weak as they were, I didn't anticipate any problems.

"I'll explain the third and final rule now. You will each be paired with someone who's closest to the skill level you demonstrated in the previous exam. I've posted a sheet that has your duel partner on it. Check your number and find your partner."

Let's see... It looks like I'm paired off with number eighty-six. I had a feeling that I'd seen this number before, but I couldn't put my finger on who it was. I had so little interest in the other applicants that I hadn't bothered to commit their numbers to memory.

"May I sit next to you again, Abel?" Just as I was thinking I should start looking for my partner, a familiar girl called out to me.

Oh. Okay, now I get it. Everything fell in place as the girl with crimson hair, Eliza, flashed the number plate on her chest to me. *Eighty-six.*

"Look at that!"

"The infamous Inferior Eyes and the red-haired girl are gonna fight!"

I see. Apparently ours is the big-ticket fight. The proctor had said that we'd be paired off with people closest to our skill level, so that must've meant that she'd placed second after me.

"Let's have a ball. I'll be sure to thoroughly judge your skill."

Eliza sounded very confident as she stuck her hand out to me. *Good grief.* All I wanted to do was stay out of the spotlight, be ignored, and graduate in peace. It seemed that at every turn, life was intent on showing me that nothing went as planned.

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Things had really gotten annoying. I hadn't encountered any real problems up till this moment and had basically been cruising through the exam, but now in the eleventh hour, a huge mountain appeared in front of me. Somehow I'd been partnered with this annoying girl, Eliza, for the duel.

"Draw your weapon! I'm gonna beat you down with my magecraft."

Good grief. What an impatient girl. Eliza already had her weapon

in her hand and was assuming a fighting stance.

"Sorry, but I won't be using a weapon. I'm not very adept with them."

"Oh? Do you have some kind of special strategy?"

I wouldn't have called it a strategy, but it was faster for me to compose spells from scratch rather than use a Regalia. My fighting style had come about not as the result of any particular emotion or preference, but from rational thinking. I doubt she would've believed me if I'd said that, though.

"I won't get into the details, but I can at least guarantee you won't be left unsatisfied."

Eliza grinned, seemingly happy with my answer. "You have an antiquated fighting style, but I don't hate it." A daring smile crept across her face as she unsheathed her sword.

In the next instant, she thrust it right at me. *Hm. She's fast.* I was surprised to discover that in this world of weak mages, there was still someone with this much potential. But even so, her attack might as well have been moving in slow motion. I did my best to hold back a yawn while circling behind her.

"Wha—" An expression of sheer shock filled her face as she desperately struggled to comprehend what was happening.

Still, this wasn't enough to completely throw her off, which was proof of just how good she was. In a real battle, it'd be fatal to come to a stop simply because your opponent had moved in an unexpected way.

"Flame Edge!" Eliza swung her Regalia back towards me, launching a blade of fire that was essentially a variation on Fireball, but with its sharpness enhanced. I'd cast this very magecraft myself, countless times before. It was beyond basic. And it would've been easy to dodge, but I decided to switch it up a bit to keep things interesting.

"Flame Edge." I produced a fiery sword twice as powerful as hers and swung it right back into her attack.

"Huh?!" As I countered her attack with overwhelming speed and force, despair filled her face.

The sound of combustion rang out as my attack engulfed hers, resulting in an explosion. She was able to dodge my attack, but it left a deep gash in the ground. *Oops. I might've gone too far.* Showing her just how big of a difference there was between us was simple, but it'd be no fun to end the match too quickly. In a sparring match

like this, the most elegant way of winning was to draw out your opponent's full power before triumphing over them.

"Yaaah!"

I had apparently underestimated Eliza's abilities. Even after seeing the difference in our strengths, she was not deterred. She hid herself in the smoke from the explosion, erasing her presence and searching vigilantly for a chance to strike.

Suddenly, I recalled what she'd said to me before. "Listen, commoner! If you want me to notice you, become the strongest here. I've no interest in anyone but the strong."

I see. It would seem that she hadn't been lying about respecting strong opponents. It wouldn't have been the least bit strange if all of this had caused her to fall into despair and give up, but she seemed instead to be genuinely enjoying this. *Good grief.* As for me, I couldn't believe that doing battle with this annoying girl was getting me a little fired up. It'd been ages since a battle had given me the slightest bit of enjoyment. At any rate, it seemed like it'd be discourteous of me to keep drawing out the battle with one hand tied behind my back. I needed to get serious.

"A decent strategy," I called out. "But not against me."

"Wha—"

I quickly dodged her blow before composing an intermediate-difficulty attack that was one of my favorites to use in real battles.

"Burning Bullet!"

By now, I'd pretty much finished gauging her ability, and figured she wouldn't be able to dodge this. After all, it was a magecraft attack with great precision. I made sure to lower its power so it wouldn't be fatal, but that said, it would still be difficult for her to continue after taking it. *This is the end of the road for you. Goodbye.*

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In the midst of oppressive pressure, where one's concentration flagging for even a split second would mean defeat, Eliza swung her blade without losing focus.

He's strong!

These were her true feelings towards Abel. The speed of his magecraft composition far exceeded what she'd believed to be possible. At first she'd thought he was hiding some kind of Regalia,

but that wasn't the case. He truly was fighting with nothing but his body.

It was hard to believe. The biggest advantage to Regalias was the fact that they could quickly produce magecraft. It almost made her question why she'd ever bothered to use them at all.

The next attack he fired off was abnormal. Usually, the more powerful you made an attack, the more information processing was necessary, making defects in the composition more likely. But for Abel, no matter how strong he made his spells, there was never the slightest decrease in quality.

He's strong. So strong that it doesn't even make sense.

But the overwhelming difference in strength only served to set her battle senses alight. She'd even begun to enjoy the situation of despair that she'd been thrust into.

"Burning Bullet!"

In the next moment, a total of twelve fireballs appeared before her. She instinctively understood that he had every intention of using this attack to end things. Each individual bullet possessed energy so large she couldn't believe it. It was already a near impossible task for even the most veteran mage to create a fireball with the strength of a single one of the twelve Abel had produced.

But the truly scary thing was realizing that the power that Abel had displayed thus far was only a fraction of his true strength.

I guess I can't be stingy with my power...

There was no way to dodge it completely. But if she tried to deflect the attacks, she'd be blown away, and the barrier around her would shatter. As she went back and forth between these choices, she ultimately landed upon a third option. She decided to use a forbidden art: Rose Madder Sky. This skill had been passed down by her ancestors, and she'd undergone harsh training to be able to use it. It was the ultimate hidden technique.

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My attack caused a huge explosion, making smoke billow out in plumes. *Hm, I'm a little surprised.* Even after taking my attack, it seemed she was okay. The fire from the explosion weakened, and it became easier to see. That's when I saw Eliza's silhouette through the smoke, her body bent over.

"Hey, are you okay?!" a proctor exclaimed, running up to her.

“Your barrier has broken. You need to yield now!”

“No! I’m not done yet,” Eliza said valiantly, shooting a glare at the proctor who’d come to help her. The pressure she exerted from this look was enough to make him quiver in fear. “I may have lost the mock duel...but our personal duel continues.”

What a sore loser. It’s almost funny. To be clear, the person whose barrier broke first was the loser. Those were the rules. But it seemed that she now perceived this as a personal duel—the rules of which stipulated that we’d keep going until one of us was no longer able to fight. In other words, Eliza had tossed the mock duel out the window, and instead wanted to win on her own terms.

“I... I’m going to prove that I’m stronger than anyone.”

Eliza stood back up, using her Regalia for support. My attack hadn’t left her unscathed. Judging by the way she moved, it was obvious that she’d been weakened and was in pain.

“Can I ask you something?” I asked. “Why are you so fixated on being strong in this era of peace?”

A strong-willed girl like her might not have been so rare back in my day, but surely she was in the modern era. Even the older spoiled rich brat had said that people could live happily in this era of peace without using magecraft.

“Peace is fake,” Eliza spat out. “An era of tranquility... These past warless years... Were they really all that peaceful? The neighboring country, Khuldrea, has been preparing its soldiers for a war that could happen at any minute. And are demons even truly extinct? There was an incident involving them just a few years ago. In the name of ‘keeping the peace,’ it was all kept hush-hush.” It was as if her words had reignited the fire inside her. The strength returned to her eyes. “People say that our treaties will prevent wars. They say that the demon king’s soul was eradicated, so he’ll never come back. Who the hell decided that?! I will never, *ever* let peace make me complacent!”

She had a point. Even in this era of peace, dangers still existed. The embers of war were being stoked in various countries. And if an all-out battle with demons began, these mages would be wiped out easily.

“That’s why I’ll become strong! I will rebuild my family to its former glory!” Eliza said, her eyes becoming slightly moist.

So this is about her family, huh? Most likely, the old teachings of her family were incompatible with the modern world. People would

treat you like you were crazy for preparing for battle in a time of peace. It was sad. People shunned those who had different values than them. It seemed that her family had mostly fallen to ruin because they'd been either unable or unwilling to adapt the values of the modern age.

"Forbidden art: Rose Madder Sky!"

The instant she shouted these words, Eliza's body was surrounded by a magic circle. *Is this some form of Body Fortification?* I immediately began to analyze it. I was surprised by how complex it was. It definitely wasn't something that a normal student would be able to pull off.

"Physical Flare!"

Okay. Now I see. Well, well. Color me surprised. A two-hundred-year-old spell managed to make its way to the modern age. I could fully imagine the kind of family that had raised her, and now that the nagging questions in my mind had been answered, a sense of relief washed over me.

Most likely she'd only been able to withstand my attack by a last-moment activation of the flame armor she was now wearing.

"Prepare yourself! This won't go like before."

This was certainly picturesque. Foulmouthed though she might have been, Eliza, or whatever her name is, looked good like this—a woman cloaked in flame. She appeared almost divine, eliciting sounds of surprise and awe from onlookers. In the next second, two wings of flame sprouted from her back, launching her into the air.

"Wh-What? She's flying!"

"Flight magecraft?! I thought that was just an urban legend!"

The people nearby all cried out at the sight. Certainly, it took a competent mage to be able to use flight magecraft. There weren't many mages who could use it in my day. After all, you needed to be able to balance your control over multiple elemental affinities. It was completely possible for those with Amber Eyes like me, but it must've taken an incredible amount of effort for a mage like Eliza, with Crimson Eyes, to master this.

"No matter how talented you are, I bet you've never seen this!"

Well…actually, at this point I'm kinda sick of seeing it. I never expected someone to inherit such a characteristic magecraft so perfectly two hundred years down the line. More than likely, her ancestors were all serious to a fault.

"Analysis over. Negation Magecraft."

Of course, since I'd witnessed this magecraft countless times, I could use my negation magecraft on it. All I had to do was analyze it first—and against magecraft I'd already analyzed, this process was obviously even faster.

There was a sound like glass breaking, and Eliza's flames scattered into nothingness.

"Huh? Huh?! Huh?!?!?!"

Eliza, having been parted from her wings in a most unseemly fashion, let out a scream, holding her skirt down as she tumbled out of the air.

Good grief. What a troublesome noble girl. I predicted where she would land and caught her.

"You're a descendant of the Fire Hero, Maria, aren't you?"

A look of utter confusion was written all across her face.

"You have talent, just like that muscle-head. Keep at it."

But seriously, is she the same age as me? If she wasn't careful, she'd end up weighing more than Lilith. It was no longer possible for me to hold her in my arms, so I dropped her and let her roll across the ground.

"The winner is applicant number twenty-seven—Abel!" the supervisor proclaimed.

As soon as she had made this proclamation, the room exploded with cheers. I was happy that Eliza's ancestors had managed to perfectly pass down the magecraft that Maria developed. Originally, Rose Madder Sky burned one's life force in exchange for

dramatically boosting one's power. If the fight went on for too long, the spell would end up fatally harming the user.

"What...What is he?" Eliza wondered in disbelief as she stared up from the ground, unable to even begin comprehending his power.

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Three hours had passed since Abel and the other examinees completed their entrance exam.

"There are quite a few interesting talents in this year's batch of prospective students."

As usual, the proctors had gathered in the faculty room to discuss the examinees.

"Oh, are you referring to the G-three?"

"G-three?"

"The Genius Three. The three examinees who stood head and shoulders above the rest—they're prodigies."

Out of over two hundred applicants, Ted, Eliza, and Abel had easily shown that they were ahead of the curve. They were elites, and were all that any of those gathered wanted to discuss.

"Oh, how promising. I can only hope that they will raise the bar for our students."

"I couldn't agree more. It'd be great if we could at least place in the top three this year."

The time when Arthlia Academy had been touted as the top academy for magecraft in the country was long past. In truth, they'd been slipping down the rankings as a result of losing exhibition matches against other schools. Essentially, they were a shadow of their former glory.

"Hmph. 'G-three'? How ridiculous," a man by the name of Emerson spat, dampening the excitement of the other teachers in the room.

He was a slender man with unkempt curly hair and round glasses. He alone was not swept away by the excitement of those around him. He was known as an eccentric instructor who stood his ground and stayed true to his opinions, regardless of what others thought.

"The only *genius* among the three is Abel," he stated clearly.

"Abel? The commoner with Amber Eyes? He may have been

very skilled with magecraft, but..."

"If we're talking about raw talent, though, we can't exactly leave Eliza out of the conversation, can we?"

Emerson exhaled, a look of annoyance on his face. He worried for future generations of mages if *these* were the instructors tasked with raising them. It was Emerson who had graded Abel's written test. In doing so, Abel's unique abilities and intelligence had stunned him.

How could this be? A mere student has perfectly solved Depornix's Last Theorem, he'd thought.

In reality, there were only a handful of modern-day magecraft researchers who completely understood the theorem. So why had such a difficult question appeared on a student's exam? It was due to Emerson's mean-spirited personality. Never in his wildest dreams, however, had he expected a student to answer this question correctly.

No, this isn't merely perfect—it exceeds that! The more he looked at Abel's answer, the more he realized that the boy had gone past simply talking about the theorem itself. He'd *improved* it. If his answer had been published as a paper, he may even have received a public commendation.

"Ho ho ho. This year's prospective students have certainly livened up your discussion."

"H-Headmaster?!" The teachers in the room let out sounds of surprise as an elderly man entered the room.

His name was Mikhael, and he was the most powerful man at this academy. In his youth, he'd been touted as the country's greatest mage. However, he wasn't *just* a skilled mage. Flowing through his veins was the blood of one of the great heroes, which made him an influential figure both domestically and internationally.

"The word 'amazing' doesn't even begin to describe this boy!" Emerson exclaimed.

"Oh? He must be a very talented child indeed if he's got a mage of your caliber this excited."

Emerson was one of the top mages in the academy. Despite his young age, he'd received numerous patents for Regalia development. The other teachers looked up to him as well.

"I guarantee that this boy, despite his Amber Eyes, will become an amazing mage who will lead this country to greater heights. I

believe in Abel!”

Mikhael began to cough.

“H-Headmaster? Are you all right?!” Emerson asked with concern.

“Oh, yes... I’m fine, but could you tell me the boy’s name once more?”

“Of course. It’s Abel! He received a perfect score on the written exam—the highest score in the history of our academy. He’s a certified genius!”

Mikhael cradled his head in his hands. He was the only one who was familiar with the name “Abel.”

“Um... Are you perhaps acquainted with the boy named Abel, sir?”

“No. It’s nothing like that. Pardon me, but could you tell me a little more about him?”

Mikhael was wishing that this was all just a nightmare, one that he’d soon wake up from. But as the teachers told him about Abel, he became increasingly uneasy.

◇◇◇

Mikhael proceeded down a darkened hallway towards stairs that led to the basement of the academy, with the dim light emanating from his lamp as his only reliable guide.

Abel? Abel?! It can’t be... It can’t be!

He glanced at a stone statue of a knight with a sword that stood nearby in the underground hallway. Reaching out, he traced the crest on one of the stone statues with his finger, and a hidden door appeared to the left. Behind this door was the Headmaster’s Office, which only a handful of people could enter.

“If I remember correctly, it should be somewhere around here...” Mikhael muttered as he unlocked a drawer in his wooden desk. He pulled out a well-preserved envelope, which contained a ragged letter that had faded from sun damage.

My dear descendants,

Listen well. I will tell you, and only you, the truth. It will be said that a party of four mages—fire, wind, water, and ash—called the “Great Four,” vanquished the demon king, but that’s a

lie. A single individual defeated him: an Amber-Eyed mage named Abel.

The four of us were powerless in the face of the demon king, but Abel defeated him single-handedly. This is the truth. Keep this in mind and remember that even if you're called the descendant of a hero, don't get too full of yourself. The true hero is Abel, and him alone. Make sure you remember that, if nothing else.

Sincerely,
The Hero of Wind, Roy

As soon as he finished reading the letter, Mikhael began to tremble. He'd heard many a time from his late grandfather that there was a *fifth* member of the "Great Four," who had the same Amber Eyes as demons and had been horribly persecuted by the world. He'd possessed overwhelming strength, but his name was never recorded and was eventually lost to time. Even after completing the great achievement of defeating the Demon King, Roy continued to wonder where Abel had gone.

"Can I simply write this off as mere coincidence...?"

It would've been easy to dismiss even the notion that they were the same person. No matter how talented the mage, there was no way that they could have survived for two hundred years. Thinking about it normally, there shouldn't have been any possibility that the Abel that Roy had spoken of was the same as the one Mikhael had now encountered in modern times. But if that was the case, then why was it that Mikhael—who'd lived many years as the descendant of a hero—felt so uneasy?

"Perhaps I should test him to determine if he is who I think he is..." Mikhael said softly as he sat in the armchair at his desk, stroking his long, white beard.

Chapter 10: The Results of the Exam

It was now the day after the turbulent entrance exams. Ted and I had spent the night in a nearby inn and had decided to go out and check the exam results. The academy designated a representative from each family to pick up the results, which were sealed in envelopes. Ted was our representative, which left me with nothing for me to do, so I simply waited at a nearby café, drinking coffee while waiting for Ted to return.

"Master, I'm back!" The door to the café flew open, and through it came a kid with dirty-blond hair who was a little shorter than me. "Look! I passed! What do you think?! I worked so hard!" Ted said as he spread out a piece of paper that had "Accepted" written on it in big red letters.

He's as loud as ever. I'd just started enjoying my coffee in peace, but then he had to go and ruin it. Back in my day, coffee had been known as the devil's drink, so it hadn't been nearly as widespread as it was now.

"Heh heh. I bet you wanna know how you did, don't you?" Ted grinned, looking at me.

"Not really. The paper says I passed, doesn't it?"

"Huh?" Ted looked incredibly confused, so I decided to explain how I'd arrived at my conclusion.

"It's simple. Though slight, the envelope shows traces of having already been opened. Taking your personality into consideration, you wouldn't have gone out of your way to ask me this if you knew I hadn't passed."

"Urk... Nothing gets by you, Master."

Good grief. You'll need another two hundred years under your belt if you want to get on my level. Ted's shock at the way I'd seen right through him was transparent.

"Anyway, mind explaining who this might be?" I asked, attempting to get some clarity on the person who'd entered the café with Ted and had been listening in on our conversation.

She must've thought she was being stealthy, because I saw her

jump a little where she was sitting on a couch. Her fiery red hair made her completely unsuited for this kind of stealth mission.

"Uh, well..." Ted averted his gaze while fumbling for an answer.

Okay, I see what happened here. Even though Ted had noticed her, he'd pretended not to and instead allowed her to follow him. And I understood why—it was awkward to tell someone who thought they were doing a good job at being stealthy that they actually weren't.

"Oh, hey! You're that girl!" Ted called out, pretending to be surprised.

"Wh-What a coincidence meeting here. I greatly enjoy this café's cupcakes."

What a terrible lie. They don't even serve cupcakes here.

"You can drop the act. Do you need something from me?"

Maria, the Hero of Fire—Eliza's ancestor—and I had known each other two hundred years ago. With that in mind, I would've preferred to remain on good terms with her descendant, but if she approached me as an enemy, I wasn't sure how well that would go. If she intended to get all up in my business, I'd have to take a more stern attitude with her.

"I-I don't really *need* something from you, but..." Eliza began fidgeting nervously. "I was just curious about what class you're in."

"My...what?"

"W-Well, you know, you're one of the few people I know. I want to try and gather as much information about the academy as I can before we start the school year."

Hm? Is there an interpreter who can explain what she's saying? What was the value in finding out what class another person was in? It certainly wasn't worth getting caught sneaking around just to find out. But she wasn't showing any signs of lying.

“Master, she’s gonna find out eventually, anyway. You might as well tell her.”

“True. I suppose I don’t mind.”

“Me and Master are in Class A. I hope we can all be in the same class!”

Can I get an interpreter for Ted too? Why would it matter if the three of us were in the same class or not? It would just make things noisier and more difficult for me to concentrate on studying.

“Oh! Class A, huh? Okay!” After hearing Ted’s answer, Eliza quickly exited the café with a bounce in her step.

Good grief. What did she even come here for? When she left, she looked like she was happy about something.

“Things are gonna get busy!” said Ted.

“Yeah—starting with moving,” I agreed.

Arthlia Academy had dorms for its students, which made living here a much better option than commuting by carriage every day all the way from the remote area we lived in.

“Are you gonna be okay, though? Don’t you live with Ms. Lilith?”

“Yeah, but knowing her, I’m sure she’ll adapt, no problem.” I had no basis for believing this, but I simply felt it in my gut to be true.

“Why, Master Abel, you know me so well.”

Lilith suddenly appeared in front of us, as if she’d swapped places with Eliza.

“Wh-Wha— Ms. Lilith?! What are you doing here?!” Ted went into full panic mode at Lilith’s sudden appearance; she had probably erased her presence.

“What’s up with your clothes?” I asked Lilith.

It seemed that she’d been waiting for me to ask, because she enthusiastically adjusted her glasses before responding. “I have something I must report to you. As of today, I have been hired as a professor at Arthlia Academy. As such, I decided to change my appearance.”

Well, I guess I'm not too surprised. Her attire really did make her look like an intellectual and a professor. It was a little vexing at how good she looked in everything, but this was probably thanks to having a good body to begin with.

"Huh?! Now?! That easily?! What kind of tricks did you use?!" Ted exclaimed, unable to accept reality.

There was nothing to be surprised about. For someone like her, getting hired at this academy must've been child's play. After all, she'd lived far longer than most people.

"From here on, I will support you as both a maid and an instructor, Master Abel," she said, giving me the same bright smile as when we'd reunited.

Good grief. It seems like I won't get any peace and quiet in the near future.

Extra Story: Youthful Memories

I'm Abel, a mage who reincarnated from two hundred years in the past, an age where those possessing Amber Eyes like myself were persecuted and discriminated against. This treatment didn't stop, even when I was working to help vanquish the demon king.

It would've been easy to forcefully shut my detractors up, but using fear to try and remedy their deep-seated feelings wouldn't solve anything. So instead, I decided to try reincarnating myself into a time of peace far in the future, and sure enough, I was successful.

Certainly, the time into which I'd been reincarnated was peaceful. But it wasn't without its difficulties. Due to a certain chain of events, I ended up stuck with an annoying boy who wouldn't stop following me around wherever I went.

"Hey, Abel, let's play!"

The door was flung open, revealing a young boy. He had dirty-blond hair and was a little on the chubby side. It was Ted. His leg was wrapped in a cast from his fall off the roof, which had partially been my fault. I'd healed his leg, which should've meant he could walk without a cast, but his physician had still insisted upon it, with the added instruction of avoiding any kind of heavy exercise.

"Sure. What do you want to do today?"

Getting to move around a bit would probably make Ted happy. This worked out for me as well, because I wanted to get some light exercise in.

"Oh—I know! How about we go to the forest behind my house?"

Hm. I've never been there before. There were a lot of modern customs that I'd been trying to catch up on, which left me with no time at all to explore outside of the town.

"Okay then, let's go."

"Yay! Let's get moving!"

I was almost impressed by how easily he'd forgotten his own doctor's instructions to take it easy. I'd healed his leg, so it would

be fine, but it really was just in one ear and out the other for him when it came to instructions.

"Master Abel, I'd advise against going into the forest." Lilith entered the room, her long silver hair glinting in the light.

She was a beauty, and the owner of the house I lived in. She was also the very same demon that I'd rescued two hundred years ago, and now she was repaying that favor.

"Why not?"

"I heard reports of a magic beast appearing in the forest last night."

For whatever reason, rather than discouraging him, this only served to excite Ted. "R-Really?! A-A magic beast?! I wanna see!"

"Why, though?"

"'Cause they're cool, obviously!"

They…are? I tilted my head in confusion. Lilith cleared her throat.

"Magic beasts were largely defeated by the heroes of the past, so their numbers are much fewer in these times. Sightings of them are incredibly rare."

Ah, I see. Back in my day, I'd certainly taken out my fair share of magic beasts. The world had been crawling with them before, but now they'd practically become endangered.

"With that said, I ask that both of you stay inside today."

"Hmph. Fine, if you say so," Ted said in disappointment, before going home.

After confirming that he'd left, I spoke up. "Why can't I go out, though? Do you think a magic beast could possibly do me in?" I asked her in a low voice. *If she really thinks that little of me just because I'm in a kid's body, then that kinda hurts.*

"I promise you, that's not what I'm thinking at all, Master Abel. There aren't many people in this world who are capable of defeating magic beasts."

Oh, now I get it. The ability level of mages had plummeted since my time, and the cause of that could've been any number of things. It could've been because the war against demons had ended, or because magic tools had been developed, or maybe because for some reason all magecraft records before my time had been lost. Regardless, modern mages were extremely weak. Coincidentally, magecraft was particularly effective against magic beasts. In other words, if modern mages struggled against magic beasts, then it

really spoke volumes as to how low they'd sunk.

"So it'd draw unwanted attention if I took one down."

"Precisely. Knights from the royal capital will be arriving tonight to do battle with the magic beast tomorrow."

"Do battle with"...but not "exterminate" or "defeat," huh? It seemed that engaging them in combat and just hoping for the best was all they were capable of.

"Okay then. I was kinda looking forward to fighting one of them, though. It's been a while, after all."

"As much as I would've enjoyed seeing your gallant figure in action, I would advise you to sit this one out," she said, gently smiling at me.

I nodded back at her, and stared out the window towards the mountains.

◇

That night, the Rhangbalt territory was a little livelier than usual—not because of a festival, but because of the excitement before a battle. I was all too familiar with this. I watched from the window as soldiers marched in, talking merrily with each other.

To me, magic beasts were no big deal, but they were massive threats to the people of the modern world. The knights were so talkative because they were nervous about losing their lives in this fight. This, at least, was the same as it had been in the past—some things just never changed.

As nostalgic as it was, I couldn't help but heave a sigh. The magic beast they were going to take out was a bear-type beast known as a kamui. It was an extremely low-level magic beast, and very weak to fire. Shooting a few flames at it would be enough to make it flee. The mages that had come should've been able to repel it without any difficulty.

I went downstairs to get something to drink. Lilith wasn't home today, because apparently she'd been enlisted to help make sure that none of the residents were hurt. She'd always been a softie.

As I was pouring myself a cup of tea, I heard a knock at the door.

"Sorry—please open the door!"

Who is that? Judging by the tone of voice, it was a guy. I furrowed my brow and answered the door.

"Is Ms. Lilith here?"

It was a muscular middle-aged man with dirty-blond hair, a beard like a lion's mane, and beautiful Crimson Eyes. He was the spitting image of a noble. I knew him as Evans, the lord of this land as well as Ted's father.

"Lilith is out at the moment."

"Oh... Maybe you can help instead. Have you seen Ted?"

Hm. He seems troubled. After the entire incident with Barth, Evans had been treating me well. I decided to answer him truthfully.

"No, I haven't seen him. Is something wrong?"

Evans nodded, his breathing ragged. "I can't find him anywhere."

"Oh, no..."

"If it's as I fear, he may have tried to go find the magic beast. If Ms. Lilith isn't home, then I'll need to ask the soldiers to help rescue him."

Evans bowed, thanking me before shutting the door. *Did Ted really go to find the magic beast? Sure, he seemed interested...but it's a wild animal. It'll kill him.*

I went back upstairs. It's not like it would have left me worse off if he stopped coming around. If anything, I'd be able to read my books in peace. But still...it'd be inconvenient to lose my exercise partner. And I could only imagine how annoying things would get if the son of a lord was killed, to boot.

I donned my coat and muffler before opening the window. I used Body Fortification, strengthening my entire body so that even as a child, I could achieve superhuman strength.

I jumped out into the eerily beautiful starry sky, my sights set on the forest. The forest stirred almost as loudly as the sea as the wind rushed through it.

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The forest was pitch black, as if no light could enter. The darkness spread out before me like spilled ink. This wasn't a problem for me, though. I had no need of aimlessly walking about. Body Fortification allowed me to focus mana into parts of my body and strengthen them. For example, by focusing mana into my eyes, I could see things far into the distance with ease.

If I strengthened particular parts of my eyes, I could even see the body heat of concealed humans or magic beasts. I scanned the area, detecting a small heat source. *That has to be Ted.* Not too far from him was another heat source—most likely the magic beast.

I dispelled my eye fortification and leapt into the forest, landing right by him. "Ted."

"A-Abel?!"

He'd curled into a ball and had been crying. I hadn't noticed until now, but it seemed he was in a shallow ditch. *Ah, I see.* He must've fallen down here and hurt himself. Then on top of that, he had no idea where he was. Fortunately, he'd only sustained a scratch. From the looks of things, he hadn't been attacked by the magic beast.

"Let's go."

"Yeah," Ted agreed, wiping his tears while getting to his feet.

Right as he did, however, the sound of trees snapping filled the air. *Good grief. The timing of this couldn't get any worse.* A monster that looked like a pure-white bear swiped a tree out of its way as it jumped out at us. *A kamui.* It had a tail like a scorpion's on its back that was functionally like a third arm. Though it wasn't venomous, it could easily rip an adult into pieces.

"A-Ahhh! I-It's a magic beast!"

"Don't scream. You're only gonna spur it on."

Well, I guess it's too late for that. The beast got on all fours and charged right at us. I grabbed Ted and jumped to the side. Its third arm barely grazed my nose.

"W-Wow! W-We're flying!!!"

"Ted, can you be quiet?"

The kamui stood up and flailed its arms, gouging the ground and ripping trees out, roots and all. Of course, there was no way that I'd be hit by such slow attacks. I shifted around behind the beast.

"Twin Fireball." I purposely fired this spell at either side of the creature to light up its surroundings and frighten it.

"Give it up. I'll have to kill you for real if you keep going," I said, looking it straight in the eyes.

Neither wild animals nor magic beasts could understand our words. But they did understand differences in power. The kamui growled deeply. *Hm, I'm surprised. You really want to keep fighting?* Animal instinct should have kicked in, making it go into self-

preservation mode, but...

Observing the kamui more closely, I saw an arrow sticking out of its thick leg. It was the same kind of decorative arrow that was used to hunt foxes. *I see. So this is why it's so on edge.* I let go of Ted and slowly approached the beast. I kept my tone stern and made sure not to break eye contact. If I did, it might do something erratic.

"It's okay. I'm not gonna kill you. Just let me get close to you," I said, slowly moving closer.

"A-Abel!" Ted called out, making the kamui tremble a little.

Looking deep into its eyes, I tried to calm the beast down. "Ted, do *not* say another word and stay right where you are. Do *not* move a muscle."

I touched the kamui as it continued to growl. It could bite me at any second, but honestly, with my Body Fortification, it wouldn't even break the skin.

"I'll make the pain go away with Heal."

Numbing the area first, I pulled out the arrow. Blood began to flow, but I immediately stopped it with Heal. After not even a minute, I was finished.

"How's that? Better?"

There probably wasn't much point in asking, but it'd stopped growling. Instead, it was now moving its nose close to my face.

"You wanna thank me? There's no need."

I lightly pet the kamui's face, eliciting a soft noise from it before it stood up and ran off into the forest. After watching it disappear, I turned to Ted.

"Okay—let's go home, Ted."

He was looking at me, his jaw slack. *What's there to be so impressed by?* I put Ted on my back to carry him before descending the mountainside.

◇

The next day, I met with Evans and Lilith. His eyes widened as I explained what'd happened. He began insisting that I should receive a public commendation, but I told him I really didn't want to stand out. So he discarded that idea and instead agreed to smooth things over so no one would suspect anything.

Now back in my room, I yawned and shut my book. I was a little sleepy, which was most likely due to having limited mana

because of how young my body was. It already cost a good deal of mana to use healing magecraft. Using it on a kamui, which was many times bigger than a human, had been extremely costly.

Suddenly, the door swung open. *Can I please just have a little peace and quiet?* But Ted seemed different today.

"Hey, Abel, about yesterday... Thanks."

"No need to thank me. It was advantageous for me to help you." I returned my eyes to my book.

"Hey! How about, as a reward for yesterday, I give you special permission to teach me magecraft?"

"Uh...huh?!" *What in the world is he saying? Why should I teach him magecraft? There's nothing in it for me whatsoever. Reward? This feels much more like a punishment.* "Hard pass. Sounds like a pain and a half."

"What?! H-Hey! Th-This is *me* we're talking about!"

"I can't change the fact that I don't want to." I shoved Ted out of my room and locked the door.

"Hey! Abel! Come on! Please teach me!"

After that, I began teaching him magecraft every now and then. Though I'd refused at first, it was annoying to have to refuse him over and over again, so before I knew it, I ended up teaching him magecraft. And just like that, he gradually became my student, although it was only later down the road that it'd become official.

Afterword

Hey! Yusura Kankitsu here. How did you enjoy *Reincarnated Mage With Inferior Eyes*?

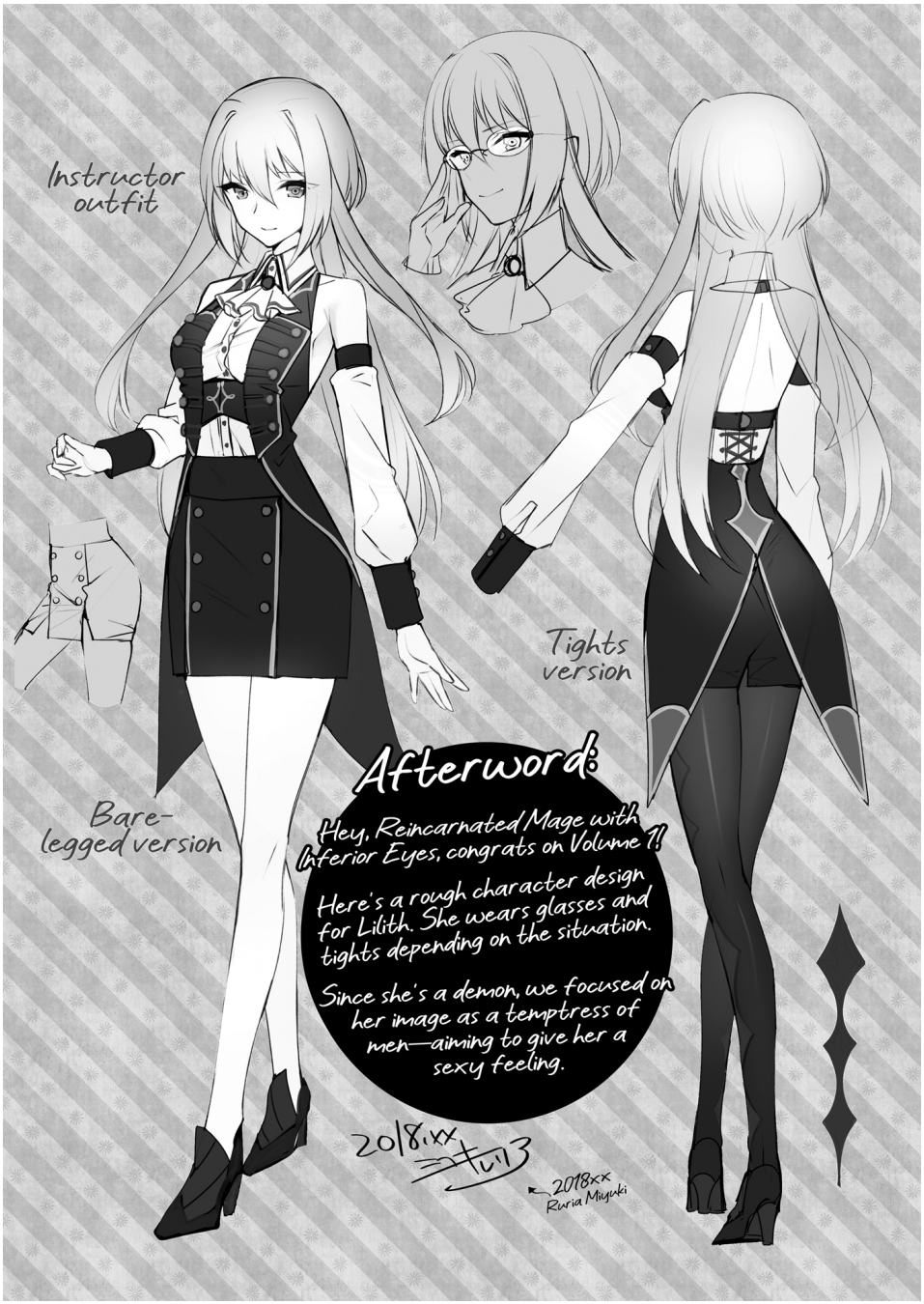
I began writing this when a certain thought popped into my head: “I should write a standard fantasy!” I can still remember that moment like it was yesterday. I was walking around town when suddenly the idea popped into my head for a world where one’s magecraft specialty directly correlated with their eye color. After that, the words just came rushing out, page after page.

That being said, the world wasn’t so kind as to immediately accept my work for publication. The only reason it made it this far is due to a string of good luck and coincidence after coincidence. Particularly, the part about “inferior eyes” was based on the ideas of a lot of different amateur and veteran authors, so I really owe it to them, and I promise I will do my best to not let you all down!

Ultimately, after getting lucky, I was able to get the first volume published, but whether or not I’ll be fortunate enough to publish volume 2 will depend on the sales of this one. I’d be happy to just see a few comments from people who liked the first volume and would like to see more.

Well, that’s it from me. I pray that we’ll be able to reunite in the second volume.

- Yusura Kankitsu


Instructor outfit
Bare-legged version
Tights version
Afterword:
Hey, Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes, congrats on Volume 7!
Here's a rough character design for Lilith. She wears glasses and tights depending on the situation.
Since she's a demon, we focused on her image as a temptress of men—aiming to give her a sexy feeling.
2018.xx
2018.xx
Ruria Miyuki

Abel
“Good grief. I’d really prefer not to stand out.”
A genius mage with Amber Eyes—the strongest eyes you can have. He succeeded in reincarnating himself two hundred years in the future in search of his ideal world.

Eliza
“Let’s have a ball. I’ll be sure to thoroughly judge your skill.”
A noble Abel runs into during the Arthlia Academy of Magecraft entrance exam. She is very prideful and is proficient with Fire magecraft. What is the secret of her lineage?!

Lilith
“From now on, I will support you as an instructor at the Academy of Magecraft.”
Saved in the past by Abel,
she is the daughter of the Demon King.
She loyally serves and supports Abel.
She has a knockout body.

A spoiled noble who inserted himself into Abel's life as a kid. He warmed up to Abel and began calling him "Master" after learning how strong he really is.
Ted
"Master!"

Spell Velocity: Fastest
Magecraft Strength: Maximum
Magecraft Variation: Scattershot
Remove limiter.
"Fireball: Spread Rain."
All of the applicants looked at me, mouthing off in surprise.
Was the magecraft I used that rare?
No way, right?

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Reincarnated Mage with Inferior Eyes: Breezing through the Future as an Oppressed Ex-Hero Volume 1
by Yusura Kankitsu

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Edited by Momo

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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Illustrations by Ruria Miyuki

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